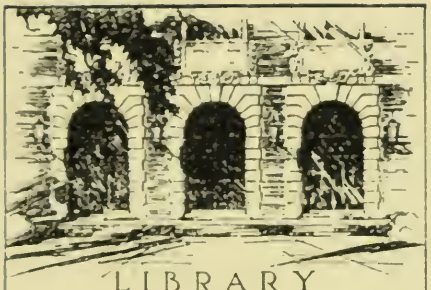

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TWO PENNILESS PRINCESSES

TWO PENNILESS PRINCESSES

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
7.	The Minstrel King's Court	3
8.	Stings	49
9.	Balchenburg	84
10.	Tender and True	126
11.	Fetters broken	160
12.	Sorrow ended	185

CHAPTER VII

THE MINSTREL KING'S COURT

'Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.'—*L'Allegro.*

THE whole of the two Courts had to be received in the capital of Lorraine in full state under the beautiful old gateway, but as mediæval pageants are wearisome matters this may be passed over, though it was exceptionally beautiful and poetic, owing to the influence of King René's taste, and it perfectly dazzled the two Scottish princesses—though, to tell the truth, they were somewhat disappointed in the personal appearance of their entertainers, who did

not come up to their notion of royalty. Their father had been a stately and magnificent man; their mother a beautiful woman. Henry VI. was a tall, well-made, handsome man, with Plantagenet fairness and regularity of feature and a sweetness all his own; but both these kings were, like all the house of Valois, small men with insignificant features and sallow complexions. René, indeed, had a distinction about him that compensated for want of beauty, and Charles had a good-natured, easy, indolent look and gracious smile that gave him an undefinable air of royalty. René's daughters were both very lovely, but their beauty came from the other side of the house, with the blood of Charles the Great, through their mother, the heiress of Lorraine.

There was a curious contrast between the brothers-in-law, Charles, when dismounting at the castle gate, not disguising his weariness and relief

that it was over, and René, eager and anxious, desirous of making all his bewildering multitude of guests as happy as possible, while the Dauphin Louis stood by, half interested and amused, half mocking. He was really fond of his uncle, though in a contemptuous superior sort of manner, despising his religious and honourable scruples as mere simplicity of mind.

René of Anjou has been hardly dealt with, as is often the case with princes upright, religious, and chivalrous beyond the average of their time, yet without the strength or the genius to enforce their rights and opinions, and therefore thrust aside. After his early unsuccessful wars his lands of Provence and Lorraine were islands of peace, prosperity, and progress, and withal he was an extremely able artist, musician, and poet, striving to revive the old troubadour spirit of Provence, and everywhere casting about him an atmosphere of refinement and kindliness.

The hall of his *hôtel* at Nanci was a beautiful place, with all the gorgeous grace of the fifteenth century, and here his guests assembled for supper soon after their arrival, all being placed as much as possible according to rank. Eleanor found herself between a deaf old Church dignitary and Duke Sigismund, on whose other side was Yolande, the Infanta, as the Provençals called the daughter of René; while Jean found the Dauphin on one side of her and a great French Duke on the other. Louis amused himself with compliments and questions that sometimes nettled her, sometimes pleased her, giving her a sense that he might admire her beauty, but was playing on her simplicity, and trying to make her betray the destitution of her home and her purpose in coming.

Eleanor, on the other hand, found her cavalier more simple than herself. In fact, he properly belonged to the Infanta, but she paid no attention to

him, nor did the Bishop try to speak to the Scottish princess. Sigismund's French was very lame, and Eleanor's not perfect, but she had a natural turn for languages, and had, in the convent, picked up some German, which in those days had many likenesses to her own broad Scotch. They made one another out, between the two languages, with signs, smiles, and laughter, and whereas the subtilties along the table represented the entire story of Sir Gawain and his Loathly Lady, she contrived to explain the story to him, greatly to his edification; and they went on to King Arthur, and he did his best to narrate the German reading of Sir Parzival. The difficulties engrossed them till the rose-water was brought in silver bowls to wash their fingers, on which Sigismund, after observing and imitating the two ladies, remarked that they had no such *Schwärmerei* in Deutschland, and Yolande looked as if she could well believe it, while Elleen, though ignorant of the

meaning of his word, laughed and said they had as little in Scotland.

There was still an hour of daylight to come, and moon-rise would not be far off, so that the hosts proposed to adjourn to the garden, where fresh music awaited them.

King René was an ardent gardener. His love of flowers was viewed as one of his weaknesses, only worthy of an old Abbot, but he went his own way, and the space within the walls of his castle at Nanci was lovely with bright spring flowers, blossoming trees, and green walks, where, as Lady Suffolk said, her grandfather could have mused all day and all night long, to the sound of the nightingales.

But what the sisters valued it for was that they could ramble away together to a stone bench under the wall, and there sit at perfect ease together and pour out their hearts to one another. Margaret,

indeed, seemed to bask in their presence, and held them as they leant against her as if to convince herself of their reality, and yet she said that they knew not what they did when they put the sea between themselves and Scotland, nor how sick the heart could be for its bonnie hills.

'O gin I could see a mountain top again, I feel as though I could lay me down and die content. What garred ye come daundering to these weary flats of France?'

'Ah, sister, Scotland is not what you mind it when our blessed father lived!'

And they told her how their lives had been spent in being hurried from one prison-castle to another.

'Prison-castles be not wanting here,' replied Margaret, with a sigh. Then, as Elleen held up a hand in delight at the thrill of a neighbouring nightingale, she cried, 'What is yon sing-song, see-saw, gurgling bird to our own bonnie laverock,

soaring away to the sky, without making such a wark of tuning his pipes, and never thinking himself too dainty and tender for a wholesome frost or two! So Jamie sent you off to seek for husbands here, did he? Couldna ye put up with a leal Scot, like Glenuskie there?'

'There were too many of them,' said Jean.

'And not ower leal either,' said Eleanor.

'Lealty is a rare plant ony gate,' sighed Margaret, 'and where sae little is recked of our Scots royalty, mayhap ye'll find that tocherless lasses be less sought for than at hame. Didna I see thee, Elleen, clavering with that muckle Archduke that nane can talk with?'

'Ay,' said Eleanor.

'He is come here a-courting Madame Yolande, with his father's goodwill, for Alsace and Tyrol be his, mountains that might be in our ain Hielands, they tell me.'

'Methought,' said Eleanor, 'she scunnered from him, as Jeanie does at—shall I say whom?'

'And reason gude,' said Margaret. 'She has a joe of her ain, Count Ferry de Vaudémont, that is the heir male of the line, and a gallant laddie. At the great joust the morn methinks ye'll see what may well be sung by minstrels, and can scarce fail to touch the heart of a true troubadour, as is my good uncle René.'

Margaret became quite animated, and her sisters pressed her to tell them if she knew of any secret; but she playfully shook her head, and said that if she did know she would not mar the romaunt that was to be played out before them.

'Nay,' said Eleanor, 'we have a romaunt of our own. May I tell, Jeanie?'

'Who recks?' replied Jean, with a little toss of her head.

Thus Eleanor proceeded to tell her sister what

—since the adventure of the goose—had gone far beyond a guess as to the tall, red-haired young man-at-arms who had ridden close behind David Drummond.

'Douglas, Douglas, tender and true,' exclaimed Margaret. 'He loves you so as to follow for weeks, nay, months, in this guise without word or look. Oh, Jeanie, Jeanie, happy lassie, did ye but ken it! Nay, put not on that scornful mou'. It sorts you not weel, my bairn. He is of degree befitting a Stewart, and even were he not, oh, sisters, sisters, better to wed with a leal loving soul in ane high peel-tower than to bear a broken heart to a throne!' and she fell into a convulsive fit of choked and bitter weeping, which terrified her sisters.

At the sound of a lute, apparently being brought nearer, accompanied with footsteps, she hastily recovered herself, and rose to her feet, while a

smile broke out over her face, as the musician, a slender, graceful figure, appeared on the path in the moonlight. 'Answering the nightingales, Maître Alain?' she said.

'This is the court of nightingales, Madame,' he replied. 'It is presumption to endeavour to rival them, even though the heart be torn like that of Philomel.' Wherewith he touched his lute, and began to sing from his famous idyll—

'Ainsi mon cœur se guermentait
De la grande douleur qu'il portait,
En ce plaisant lieu solitaire
Où un doux ventelet venait,
Si seri qu'on le sentait
Lorsque la violette mieux flaire.'

Again, as Eleanor heard the sweet strains, and saw the long shadows of the trees and the light of the rising moon, it was like the attainment of her dreamland; and Margaret proceeded to make known to her sisters Maître Alain Chartier, the prince of song, adding, 'Thou, too, wast a songster,

sister Elleen, even while almost a babe. Dost sing as of old?'

'I have brought my father's harp,' said Eleanor.

'Ah! I must hear it,' she cried with effusion. 'The harp. It will be his voice again.'

'Madame! Madame! Madame la Dauphine. Out here! Ever reckless of dew — ay, and of waur than dew.'

These last words were added in Scotch, as a tall, dark-cloaked figure appeared on the scene from between the trees. Margaret laughed, with a little annoyance in her tone, as she said, 'Ever my shadow, good Madame, ever wearying yourself with care. Here, sisters, here is my trusty and well-beloved Dame de Ste. Petronelle, who takes such care of me that she dogs my footsteps like a messan.'

'And reason gude,' replied the lady. 'Here is the muckle hall all alight, and this King René, as

they call him, twanging on his lute, and but that the Seigneur Dauphin is talking to the English Lord on some question of Gascon boundaries, we should have him speiring for you. I saw the eye of him roaming after you, as it was.'

'His eye seeking me!' cried Margaret, springing up from her languid attitude with a tone like exultation in her voice, such as evoked a low sigh from the old dame, as all began to move towards the castle. She was the widow of a Scotch adventurer who had won lands and honours in France; and she was now attached to the service of the Dauphiness, not as her chief lady—that post was held by an old French countess—but still close enough to her to act as her guardian and monitor whenever it was possible to deal with her.

The old lady, in great delight at meeting a compatriot, poured out her confidences to Dame Lilias of Glenuskie. Infinitely grieved and annoyed was

she when, early as were the ordinary hours of the Court of Nanci, it proved that the Dauphiness had called up her sisters an hour before, and taken them across the chace which surrounded the castle to hear mass at a convent of Benedictine nuns.

It was perfectly safe, though only a tirewoman and a page followed the Dauphiness, and only Annis attended her two sisters, for the grounds were enclosed, and King René's domains were far better ruled and more peaceful than those of the princes who despised him. It was an exquisite spring morning, with grass silvery with dew and enamelled with flowers, birds singing ecstatically on every branch, squirrels here and there racing up a trunk. Margaret was in joyous spirits, and almost danced between her sisters. Eleanor was amazed at the luxuriant beauty of the scene, and could not admire enough. Jean, though at first a little cross at the early summons, could not but be infected with their

delight, and the three laughed and frolicked together with almost childish glee in the delight of their content.

The great, gentle-eyed, long-horned kine were being driven in at the convent-yard to be milked by the lay-sisters; at another entrance, peasants, beggars, and sick were congregating; the bell from the lace-works spire rang out, and the Dauphiness led the way to the gateway, where, at her knock on the iron-studded door, a lay-sister looked through the wicket.

'Good sister, here are some early pilgrims to the shrine of St. Scolastique,' she began.

'To the other gate,' said the portress hastily.

Margaret's face twinkled with fun. 'I wad fain take a turn with the beggar crew,' she said to her sisters in Scotch; 'but it might cause too great an outcry if I were kenned. Commend me to the Mère St. Antoine,' she added in French, 'and tell

her that the Dauphiness would fain hear mass with her.'

The portress cast an anxious doubtful glance, but being apparently convinced, cried out for pardon, while hastily unlocking her door, and sending a message to the Abbess.

As they entered the cloistered quadrangle the nuns in black procession were on their way to mass, but turned aside to receive their visitors. Margaret knelt for a moment for the blessing and kiss of the Abbess, then greeted the nun whom she had mentioned, but begged for no further ceremony, and then was led into church.

It was a brief festival mass, and was not really over before she, with a restlessness of which her sisters began to be conscious, began to rise and make her way out. A nun followed and entreated her to stay and break her fast, but she would accept nothing save a draught of milk, swallowed hastily,

and with signs of impatience as her sisters took their turn.

She walked quickly, rather as one guilty of an escapade, again surprising her sisters, who fancied the liberty of a married princess illimitable.

Jean even ventured to ask her why she went so fast, 'Would the King of France be displeased?'

'He! Poor gude sire Charles! He heeds not what one does, good or bad; no, not the murdering of his minion before his eyes,' said Margaret, half laughing.

'Thy husband, would he be angered?' pressed on Jean.

'My husband? Oh no, it is not in the depth and greatness of his thoughts to find fault with his poor worm,' said Margaret, a strange look, half of exultation, half of pain, on her face. 'Ah! Jeanie, woman, none kens in sooth how great and wise my Dauphin is, nor how far he sees beyond all around

him, so that he cannot choose but scorn them and make them his tools. When he has the power, he will do more for this poor realm of France than any king before him.'

'As our father would have done for Scotland,' said Eleanor. 'Then he tells thee of his plans?'

'Me!' said Margaret, with the suffering look returning. 'How should he talk to me, the muckle uncouthie wife that I am, kenning nought but a wheen ballads and romaunts—not even able to give him the heir for whom he longs,' and she wrung her hands together, 'how can I be aught but a pain and grief to him!'

'Nay, but thou lovest him?' said Jean, over simply.

'Lassie!' exclaimed Margaret hotly, 'what thinkest thou I am made of? How should a wife not love her man, the wisest, canniest prince in Christendom, too! Love him! I worship him, as

the trouvères say, with all my heart, and wad lay down my life if I could win one kind blush of his eye; and yet—and yet—such a creature am I that I am ever wittingly or unwittingly transgressing these weary laws, and garring him think me a fool, or others report me such,' clenching her hands again.

'Madame de Ste. Petronelle?' asked Jean.

'She! Oh no! She is a true loyal Lindsay, heart and soul, dour and wearisome; but she would guard me from every foe, and most of all, as she is ever telling me, from mine ain self, that is my worst enemy. Only she sets about it in such guise that, for very vexation, I am driven farther! No, it is the Countess de Craylièrre, who is forever spiting me, and striving to put whatever I do in a cruel light, if I dinna walk after her will—hers, as if she could rule a king's daughter!'

And Margaret stamped her foot on the ground, while a hot flush arose in her cheeks. Her sisters,

young girls as they were, could not understand her moods, either of wild mirth, eager delight in poetry and music, childish wilfulness and petulant temper, or deep melancholy, all coming in turn with feverish alternation and vehemence. As the ladies approached the castle they were met by various gentlemen, among whom was Maître Alain Chartier, and a bandying of compliments and witticisms began in such rapid French that even Eleanor could not follow it; but there was something in the ring of the Dauphiness's hard laugh that pained her, she knew not why.

At the entrance they found the chief of the party returning from the cathedral, where they had heard mass, not exactly in state, but publicly.

'Ha! ha! good daughter,' laughed the King, 'I took thee for a slug abed, but it is by thy errant fashion that thou hast cheated us.'

'I have been to mass at St. Mary's,' returned

Margaret, 'with my sisters. I love the early walk across the park.'

'No wonder,' came from between the thin lips of the Dauphin, as his keen little eye fell on Chartier.

Margaret drew herself up and vouchsafed not to reply. Jean marvelled, but Eleanor felt with her, that she was too proud to defend herself from the insult. Madame de Ste. Petronelle, however, stepped forward and began: 'Madame la Dauphine loves not attendance. She made her journey alone with Mesdames ses sœurs with no male company, till she reached home.'

But before the first words were well out of the good lady's mouth Louis had turned away, with an air of the most careless indifference, to a courtier in a long gown, longer shoes, and a jewelled girdle, who became known to the sisters as Messire Jamet de Tillay. Eleanor felt indignant. Was he too heedless of his wife to listen to the vindication?

Madame de Ste. Petronelle took the Lady of Glenuskie aside and poured out her lamentations. That was ever the way, she said, the Dauphiness *would* give occasion to slanderers, by her wilful ways, and there were those who would turn all she said or did against her, poisoning the ear of the Dauphin, little as he cared.

'Is he an ill man to her?' asked Dame Lilias, little prepossessed by his looks.

'He! Madame, mind you an auld tale of the Eatin wi' no heart in his body! I verily believe he and his father both were created like that giant. No that the King is sair to live with either, so that he can eat and drink and daff, and be let alone to take his ease. I have seen him; and my gude man and them we kenned have marked him this score of years; and whether his kingdom were lost or won, whether his best friends were free or bound, dead or alive, he recked as little as though it were a

game of chess, so that he can sit in the ingle neuk at Bourges and toy with Madame de Beauté, shameless limmer that she is! and crack his fists with yon viper, Jamet de Tillay, and the rest of the crew. But he'll let you alone, and has a kindly word for them that don't cross him—and there be those that would go through fire and water for him. He is no that ill! But for his son, he has a sneer and a spite such as never his father had. He is never a one to sit still and let things gang their gate; but he has as little pity or compassion as his father, and if King Charles will not stir a finger to hinder a gruesome deed, Dauphin Louis will not spare to do it so that he can gain by it, and I trow verily that to give pain and sting with that bitter tongue of his is joy to him.'

'Then is there no love between him and our princess?'

'Alack, lady, there is love, but 'tis all on one

side of the house. I doubt me whether Messire le Dauphin hath it in him to love any living creature. I longed, when I saw your maidens, that my poor lady had been as bonnie as her sister Joanna; but mayhap that would not have served her better. If she were as dull as the Duchess of Brittany—who they say can scarce find a word to give to a stranger at Nantes—she might even anger him less than she does with her wit and her books and her verses, sitting up half the night to read and write rondeaux, forsooth!'

'Her blessed father's own daughter!'

'That may be; but how doth it suit a wife? It might serve here, where every one is mad after poesy, as they call it; but such ways are in no good odour with the French dames, who never put eye to book, pen to paper, nor foot to ground if they can help it; and when she behoves to gang off roaming afoot, as she did this morn, there's no

garring the ill-minded carlines believe that there's no ill purpose behind.'

'It is scarce wise.'

'Yet to hear her, 'tis such walking and wearing herself out that keeps the life in her and alone gives her sleep. My puir bairn, worshipping the very ground her man sets foot on, and never getting aught but a gibe or a girn from him, and, for the very wilfulness of her sair heart, ever putting herself farther from him!'

Such was the piteous account that Madame de Ste. Petronelle (otherwise Dame Elspeth Johnstone) gave, and which the Lady of Glenuskie soon perceived to be only too true during the days spent at Nanci. To the two young sisters the condition of things was less evident. To Margaret their presence was such sunshine, that they usually saw her in her highest, most flighty, and imprudent spirits, taking at times absolute delight in shocking

her two duennas; and it was in this temper that, one hot noon day, coming after an evening of song and music, finding Alain Chartier asleep on a bench in the garden, she declared that she must kiss the mouth from which such sweet strains proceeded, and bending down, imprinted so light a kiss as not to waken him, then turned round, her whole face rippling with silent laughter at the amusement of Jean and Margaret of Anjou, Elleen's puzzled gravity, and the horror and dismay of her elder ladies. But Dame Lilias saw what she did not—a look of triumphant malice on the face of Jamet de Tillay. Or at other times she would sit listening, with silent tears in her eyes, to plaintive Scottish airs on Eleanor's harp, which she declared brought back her father's voice to her, and with it the scent of the heather, and the very sight of Arthur's Seat or the hills of Perth. Elleen had some sudden qualms of heart lest her sister's blitheness should be covering wounds

within; but she was too young to be often haunted by such thoughts in the delightful surroundings in which that Easter week was spent—the companionship of their sister and of the two young Infantas of Anjou, as well as all the charm of King René's graceful attention. Eleanor had opened to her fresh stores of beauty, exquisite illuminations, books of all kinds—legend, history, romance, poetry—all freely displayed to her by her royal host, who took an elderly man's delight in an intelligent girl; nor, perhaps, was the pleasure lessened by the need of explaining to Archduke Sigismund, in German ever improving, that which he could not understand. There was a delightful freedom about the Court—not hard, rugged, always on the defence, like that of Scotland; nor stiffly ecclesiastical, as had been that of Henry of Windsor; but though there was devotion every morning, there was for the rest of the day holiday-making according to each one's taste—not

hawking, for the 'bon roi René' was merciful to the birds in nesting time, for which he was grumbled and laughed at by the young nobles, and it may be feared by Jean, who wanted to exhibit Skywing's prowess; but there was riding at the ring, and jousting, or long rides in the environs, minstrelsy in the gardens, and once a graceful ballet of the King's own composition; and the evenings, sometimes in-doors, sometimes out-of-doors, were given to song and music. Altogether it was a land of enchantment to most, whether gaily or poetically inclined.

Only there were certain murmurs by the rugged Scots and fierce Gascons among the guests. George observed to David Drummond that he felt as if this was a nest of eider-ducks, all down and fluff. Davie responded that it was like a pasteboard town in a mystery play, and that he longed to strike at it with his good broadsword. The English squire who stood by, in his turn compared it to a castle of

flummery and blanc-manger. A French captain of a full company declared that he wished he had the plundering of it; and a fierce-looking mountaineer of the Vosges of Alsace growled that if the harping old King of Nowhere flouted his master, Duke Sigismund, maybe they should have a taste of plunder.

There was actually to be a tournament on the Monday, the day before the wedding, and a first tournament was a prodigious event in the life of a young lady. Jean was in the utmost excitement, and never looked at her own pretty face of roses and lilies in the steel mirror without comparing it with those of the two Infantas in the hope of being chosen Queen of Beauty; but, to her great disappointment, King René prudently ordained that there should be no such competition, but that the prizes should be bestowed by his sister, the Queen of France.

The Marquess of Suffolk requested Sir Patrick to convey to young Douglas a free offer of fitting him out for the encounter, with armour and horse if needful, and even of conferring knighthood on him, so that he might take his place on equal terms in the lists.

'He would like to do it, the insolent loon!' was Geordie's grim comment. 'Will De la Pole dare to talk of dubbing the Red Douglas! When I bide his buffet, it shall be in another sort. When I take knighthood, it shall be from my lawful King or my father.'

'So I shall tell him,' replied Sir Patrick, 'and I deem you wise, for there be tricks of French chivalry that a man needs to know ere he can acquit himself well in the lists; and to see you fail would scarce raise you in the eyes of your lady.'

'More like they would find too much earnest in the midst of their sham?' returned Geordie. 'You

had best tell your English Marquis, as he calls himself, that he had better not trust a lance in a Scotsman hand, if he wouldna have all the shams that fret me beyond my patience about their ears.'

This was not exactly what Sir Patrick told the Marquis; though he was far from disapproving of the resolution. He kept an eye on this strange follower, and was glad to see that there was no evil or licence in his conduct, but that he chiefly consorted with David and a few other young squires to whom this week, so delightful to the ladies, was inexpressibly wearisome.

Tournaments have been described, so far as the nineteenth century can describe them, so often that no one wishes to hear more of their details. These had nearly reached their culmination in the middle of the fifteenth century. Defensive armour had become highly ornamental and very cumbrous, so that it was scarcely possible for the champions to do

one another much harm, except that a fall under such a weight was dangerous. Thus it was only an exercise of skill in arms and horsemanship on which the ladies gazed as they sat in the gallery around Queen Marie, the five young princesses together forming, as the minstrels declared, a perfect wreath of loveliness. The Dauphiness, with a flush on her cheek and an eager look on her face, her tall form, and dress more carefully arranged than usual, looked well and princely; Eleanor, very like her, but much developed in expression and improved in looks since she left home, and a beauty of her own; but the palm lay between the other three—Yolande, tall, grave, stately, and anxious, with darker blue eyes and brown hair than her sister, who, with her innocent childish face, showing something of the shyness of a bride, sat somewhat back, as if to conceal herself between Yolande and Jean, who was all excitement, her cheeks flushed, and her sunny

hair seeming to glow with a radiance of its own. Duke Sigismund was among the defenders, in a very splendid suit of armour, made in Italy, and embossed in that new taste of the Cinquecento that was fast coming in.

The two kings began with an amicable joust, in which René had the best of it. Then they took their seats, and as usual there was a good deal of riding one against the other at the lists, and shivering of lances; while some knights were borne backwards, horse and all, others had their helmets carried off; but René, who sat in great enjoyment, with his staff in hand, between his sister and her husband, King Charles, had taken care that all the weapons should be blunted. Sigismund, a tall, large, strongly made man, was for some time the leading champion. Perhaps there was an understanding that the Lion of Hapsburg and famed Eagle of the Tyrol was to carry all before him and win, in an undoubted

manner, the prize of the tourney, and the hand of the Infanta Yolande. Certainly the colour rose higher and higher in her delicate cheek, but those nearest could see that it was not with pleasure, for she bit her lip with annoyance, and her eyes wandered in search of some one.

Presently, in a pause, there came forward on a tall white horse a magnificently tall man, in plain but bright armour, three allerions or beakless eagles on his breast, and on his shield a violet plant, with the motto, *Si douce est la violette.* The Dauphiness leant across her sister and squeezed Yolande's hand vehemently, as the knight inclined his lance to the King, and was understood to crave permission to show his prowess. Charles turned to René, whose good-humoured face looked annoyed, but who could not withhold his consent. The Dauphiness, whose vehement excitement was more visible than even Yolande's, whispered to Eleanor that this was Messire

Ferry de Vaudémont, her true love, come to win her at point of the lance.

History is the parent of romance, and romance now and then becomes history. It is an absolute and undoubted fact that Count Frederic or Ferry de Vaudémont, the male representative of the line of Charles the Great, did win his lady-love, Yolande of Anjou, by his good lance within the lists, and that thus the direct descent was brought eventually back to Lorraine, though this was not contemplated at the time, since Yolande had then living both a brother and a nephew, and it was simply for her own sake that Messire Ferry, in all the strength and beauty that descended to the noted house of Guise, was now bearing down all before him, touching shield after shield, only to gain the better of their owners in the encounter. Yolande sat with a deep colour in her cheeks, and her hands clasped rigidly together without a movement, while the

Lorrainer spectators, with a strong suspicion who the Knight of the Violet really was, and with a leaning to their own line, loudly applauded each victory.

King René, long ago, had had to fight for his wife's inheritance with this young man's father, who, supported by the strength of Burgundy, had defeated and made him prisoner, so that he was naturally disinclined to the match, and would have preferred the Hapsburg Duke, whose Alsatian possessions were only divided from his own by the Vosges; but his generous and romantic spirit could not choose but be gained by the proceeding of Count Ferry, and the mute appeal in the face and attitude of his much-loved daughter.

He could not help joining in the applause at the grace and ease of the young knight, till by and by all interest became concentrated on the last critical encounter with Sigismund.

Every one watched almost breathlessly as the

big heavy Austrian, mounted on a fresh horse, and the slim Lorrainer in armour less strong but less weighty, had their meeting. Two courses were run with mere splintering of lance; at the third, while René held his staff ready to throw if signs of fighting *à l'outrance* appeared, Ferry lifted his lance a little, and when both steeds recoiled from the clash, the azure eagle of the Tyrol was impaled on the point of his lance, and Sigismund, though not losing his saddle, was bending low on it, half stunned by the force of the blow. Down went René's warder. Loud were the shouts, 'Vive the Knight of the Violet! Victory to the Allerions!'

The voice of René was as clear and exulting as the rest, as the heralds, with blast of trumpet, proclaimed the Chevalier de la Violette the victor of the day, and then came forward to lead him to the feet of the Queen of France. His helmet was removed, and at the face of manly beauty that it

revealed, the applause was renewed; but as Marie held out the prize, a splendidly hilted sword, he bowed low, and said, 'Madame, one boon alone do I ask for my guerdon.' And withal, he laid the blue eagle on his lance at the feet of Yolande.

René was not the father to withstand such an appeal. He leapt from his chair of state, he hurried to Yolande in her gallery, took her by the hand, and in another moment Ferry had sprung from his horse, and on the steps knight and lady, in their youthful glory and grace, stood hand in hand, all blushes and bliss, amid the ecstatic applause of the multitude, while the Dauphiness shed tears of joy. Thus brilliantly ended the first tournament witnessed by the Scottish princesses. Eleanor had been most interested on the whole in Duke Sigismund, and had exulted in his successes, and been sorry to see him defeated; but then she knew that Yolande dreaded his victory, and she suspected that he did not greatly care for

Yolande, so that, since he was not hurt, and was certainly the second in the field, she could look on with complacency.

Moreover, at the evening's dance, when Margaret and Suffolk, Ferry and Yolande stood up for a stately pavise together, Sigismund came to Eleanor, and while she was thinking whether or not to condole with him, he shyly mumbled something about not regretting—being free—the Dauphin, her brother, enduring a beaten knight. It was all in a mixture of French and German, mostly of the latter, and far less comprehensible than usual, unless, indeed, maidenly shyness made her afraid to understand or to seem to do so. He kept on standing by her, both of them, mute and embarrassed, not quite unconscious that they were observed, perhaps secretly derided by some of the lookers-on. The first relief was when the Dauphiness came and sat down by her sister, and began to talk fast in French, scarce

heeding whether the Duke understood or answered her.

One question he asked was, who was the red-faced young man with stubbly sunburnt hair, and a scar on his cheek, who had appeared in the lists in very gaudy but ill-fitting armour, and with a great raw-boned, snorting horse, and now stood in a corner of the hall with his eyes steadily fixed on the Lady Joanna.

'So!' said Sigismund. 'That fellow is the Baron Rudiger von Batchburg Der Schelm! How has he the face to show himself here?'

'Is he one of your Borderers — your robber Castellanes?' asked Margaret.

'Even so! His father's castle of Balchenburg is so cunningly placed on the march between Elsass and Lothringen that neither our good host nor I can fully claim it, and these rogues shelter themselves behind one or other of us till it is, what they call in Germany a Rat Castle, the refuge of all the

écorcheurs and *routiers* of this part of the country. They will bring us both down on them one of these days, but the place is well-nigh past scaling by any save a gemsbock or an *écorcheur!*'

Jean herself had remarked the gaze of the Alsatian mountaineer. It was the chief homage that her beauty had received, and she was somewhat mortified at being only viewed as part of the constellation of royalty and beauty doing honour to the Infantas. She believed, too, that if Geordie of the Red Peel had chosen, he could have brought her out in as effective and romantic a light as that in which Yolande had appeared, and she was in some of her moods hurt and angered with him for refraining, while in others she supposed sometimes that he was too awkward thus to venture himself, and at others she did him the justice of believing that he disdained to appear in borrowed plumes.

The wedding was by no means so splendid an

affair as the tournament, as, indeed, it was merely a marriage by proxy, and Yolande and her Count of Vaudémont were too near of kin to be married before a dispensation could be procured.

The King and Queen of France would leave Nanci to see the bride partly on her way. The Dauphin and his wife were to tarry a day or two behind, and the princesses belonged to their Court. Sir Patrick had fulfilled his charge of conducting them to their sister, and he had now to avail himself of the protection of the King's party as far as possible on the way to Paris, where he would place Malcolm at the University, and likewise meet his daughter's bridegroom and his father.

Dame Lilias did not by any means like leaving her young cousins, so long her charge, without attendants of their own; but the Dauphiness gave them a tirewoman of her own, and undertook that Madame de Ste. Petronelle should attend them in

case of need, as well as that she would endeavour to have Annis, when Madame de Terreforte, at her Court as long as they were there. They also had a squire as equerry, and George Douglas was bent on continuing in that capacity till his outfit from his father arrived, as it was sure to do sooner or later.

Margaret knew who he was, and promised Sir Patrick to do all in her power for him, as truly his patience and forbearance well deserved.

It was a very sorrowful parting between the two maidens and the Lady of Glenuskie, who for more than half a year had been as a mother to them, nay, more than their own mother had ever been; and had done much to mitigate the sharp angles of their neglected girlhood by her influence. In a very few months more she would see James, and Mary, and the 'weans'; and the three sisters loaded her with gifts, letters, and messages for all. Eleanor promised never to forget her counsel, and to strive

not to let the bright new world drive away all those devout feelings and hopes that Mother Clare and King Henry had inspired, and that Lady Drummond had done her best to keep up.

Duke Sigismund had communicated to Sir Patrick his intention of making a formal request to King James for the hand of the Lady Eleanor. He was to find an envoy to make his proposal in due form, who would join Sir Patrick at Terreforte after the wedding was over, so as to go with the party to Scotland.

Meantime, with many fond embraces and tears, Lady Drummond took leave of her princesses, and they owned themselves to feel as if a protecting wall had been taken away in her and her husband.

'It is folly, though, thus to speak,' said Jean, 'when we have our sister, and her husband, and his father, and all his Court to protect us.'

'We ought to be happy,' said Eleanor gravely.

'Outside here at Nanci, it is all that my fancy ever shaped, and yet—and yet there is a strange sense of fear beyond.'

'Oh, talk not that gate,' cried Jean, 'as thou wilt be having thy gruesome visions!'

'No; it is not of that sort,' returned Eleanor. 'I trow not! It may be rather the feeling of the vanity of all this world's show.'

'Oh, for mercy's sake, dinna let us have clavers of that sort, or we shall have thee in yon nunnery!' exclaimed Jean. 'See this girdle of Maggie's, which she has given me. Must I not make another hole to draw it up enough for my waist?'

'Jean herself was much disappointed when Margaret, with great regret, told her that the Dauphin had to go out of his way to visit some castles on his way to Châlons sur Marne, and that he could not encumber his hosts with so large a train as the presence of two royal ladies rendered

needful. They were, therefore, to travel by another route, leading through towns where there were hostels. Madame de Ste. Petronelle was to go with them, and an escort of trusty Scots archers, and all would meet again in a fortnight's time.

All sounded simple and easy, and Margaret repeated, 'It will be a troop quite large enough to defend you from all *écorcheurs*; indeed, they dare not come near our Scottish archers, whom Messire, my husband, has told off for your escort. And you will have your own squire,' she added, looking at Jean.

'That's as he lists,' said Jean scornfully.

'Ah, Jeanie, Jeanie, thou mayst have to rue it if thou turn'st lightly from a leal heart.'

'I'm not damsel-errant of romance, as thou and Elleen would fain be,' said Jean.

'Nay,' said Margaret, 'love is not mere romance. And oh, sister, credit me, a Scots lassie's heart craves better food than crowns and coronets. Hard

and unco cold be they, where there is no warmth to meet the yearning soul beneath, that would give all and ten times more for one glint of a loving eye, one word from a tender lip.' Again she had one of those hysteric bursts of tears, but she laughed herself back, crying, 'But what is the treason wifie saying of her gudeman—her Louis, that never yet said a rough word to his Meg?'

Then came another laugh, but she gathered herself up at a summons to come down and mount.

She was tenderly embraced by all, King René kissing her and calling her his dear niece and princess of minstrelsy, who should come to him at Toulouse and bestow the golden violet.

She rode away, looking back smiling and kissing her hand, but Eleanor's eyes grew wide and her cheeks pale.

'Jean,' she murmured, low and hoarsely, 'Margaret's shroud is up to her throat.'

'Hoots with thy clavers,' exclaimed Jeanie in return. 'I never let thee sing that fule song, but Meg's fancies have brought the megrims into thine head! Thou and she are pair.'

'That we shall be nae longer,' sighed Eleanor. 'I saw the shroud as clear as I see yon cross on the spire.'

CHAPTER VIII

STINGS

'Yet one asylum is my own,
Against the dreaded hour;
A long, a silent, and a lone,
Where kings have little power.'—SCOTT.

AT Châlons, the Sieur de Terreforte and his son Olivier, a very quiet, stiff, and well-trained youth, met Sir Patrick and the Lady of Glenuskie. Terreforte was within the province of Champagne, and as long as the Court remained at Châlons the Sieur felt bound to remain in attendance on the King—lodging at his own house, or *hôtel*, as he called it, in the city. Dame Lilias did not regret anything which gave her a little more time with her daughter, and enabled Annis to make a little more acquaint-

ance with her bridegroom and his family before being left alone with them. Moreover, she hoped to see something more of her cousins the princesses.

But they came not. The Dauphin and his wife arrived from their excursion and took up their abode in the Castle of Surry le Château, at a short distance from thence; and thither went the Lady of Glenuskie with her husband to pay her respects, and present the betrothed of her daughter.

Margaret was sitting in a shady nook of the walls, under the shade of a tall, massive tower, with a page reading to her, but in that impulsive manner which the Court of France thought *grossière* and *sauvage*; she ran down the stone stairs and threw herself on the neck of her cousin, exclaiming, however, 'But where are my sisters?'

'Are they not with your Grace? I thought to find them here!'

'Nay! They were to start two days after us,

with an escort of archers, while we visited the shrine of St. Menéhould. They might have been here before us,' exclaimed Margaret, in much alarm. 'My husband thought our train would be too large if they went with us.'

'If we had known that they were not to be with your Grace, we would have tarried for them,' said Dame Lilias.

'Oh, cousin, would that you had!'

'Mayhap King René and his daughter persuaded them to wait a few days.'

That was the best hope, but there was much uneasiness when another day passed and the Scottish princesses did not appear. Strange whispers, coming from no one knew where, began to be current that they had disappeared in company with some of those wild and gay knights who had met at the tournament at Nanci.

In extreme alarm and indignation, Margaret

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repaired to her husband. He was kneeling before the shrine of the Lady in the Chapel of Surry, telling his beads, and he did not stir, or look round, or relax one murmur of his Aves, while she paced about, wrung her hands, and vainly tried to control her agitation. At last he rose, and coldly said, 'I knew it could be no other who thus interrupted my devotions.'

'My sisters!' she gasped.

'Well, what of them?'

'Do you know what wicked things are said of them — the dear maids? Ah!'—as she saw his strange smile—'you have heard! You will silence the fellows, who deserve to have their tongues torn out for defaming a king's daughters.'

'Verily, ma mie,' said Louis, 'I see no such great improbability in the tale. They have been bred up to the like, no doubt a mountain kite of the Vosges is a more congenial companion than a chevalier bien courtois.'

'You speak thus simply to tease your poor Margot,' she said, pleading yet trembling; 'but I know better than to think you mean it.'

'As my lady pleases,' he said.

'Then will I send Sir Patrick with an escort to seek them at Nanci and bring them hither?'

'Where is this same troop to come from?' demanded Louis.

'Our own Scottish archers, who will see no harm befall my blessed father's daughters.'

'Ha! say you so? I had heard a different story from Buchan, from the Grahams, the Halls. Revenge is sweet—as your mother found it.'

'The murderers had only their deserts.' Louis shrugged his shoulders, 'That is as their sons may think.'

'No one would be so dastardly as to wreak vengeance on two young helpless maids,' cried Margaret. 'Oh! sir, help me; what think you?'

'Madame knows better than I do the spirit alike of her sisters and of her own countrymen.'

'Nay, nay, Monsieur, husband, do but help me! My poor sisters in this strange land! You, who are wiser than all, tell me what can have become of them?'

'What can I say, Madame? Love—love of the minstrel kind seems to run in the family. You all have supped full thereof at Nanci. If report said true, there was a secret lover in their suite. What so likely as that the May game should have become earnest?'

'But, sir, we are accountable. My sisters were entrusted to us.'

'Not to me,' said Louis. 'If the boy, your brother, expected me to find husbands and dowers for a couple of wild, penniless, feather-pated damsels-errant, he expected far too much. I know far too well what are Scotch manners and ideas of decorum to charge myself with the like.'

'Sir, do you mean to insult me?' demanded Margaret, rising to the full height of her tall stature.

'That is as Madame may choose to fit the cap,' he said, with a bow; 'I accuse her of nothing,' but there was an ironical smile on his thin lips which almost maddened her.

'Speak out; oh, sir, tell me what you dare to mean!' she said, with a stamp of her foot, clasping her hands tightly.

He only bowed again.

'I know there are evil tongues abroad,' said Margaret, with a desperate effort to command her voice; 'but I heeded them no more than the midges in the air while I knew my lord and husband heeded them not! But—oh! say you do not.'

'Have I said that I did?'

'Then for a proof—dismiss and silence that foul-slandering wretch, Jamet de Tilly.'

'A true woman's imagination that to dismiss is to silence,' he laughed.

'It would show at least that you will not brook to have your wife defamed! Oh! sir, sir,' she cried, 'I only ask what any other husband would have done long ago of his own accord and rightful anger. Smile not thus—or you will see me frenzied.'

'Smiles best befit woman's tears,' said Louis coolly. 'One moment for your sisters, the next for yourself.'

'Ah! my sisters! my sisters! Wretch that I am, to have thought of my worthless self for one moment. Ah! you are only teasing your poor Margot! You will act for your own honour and theirs in sending out to seek them!'

'My honour and theirs may be best served by their being forgotten.'

Margaret became inarticulate with dismay, indignation, disappointment, as these envenomed stings

went to her very soul, further pointed by the curl of Louis's thin lips and the sinister twinkle of his little eyes. Almost choked, she stammered forth the demand what he meant, only to be answered that he did not pretend to understand the Scottish errant nature, and pointing to a priest entering the church, he bade her not make herself conspicuous, and strolled away.

Margaret's despair and agony were inexpressible. She stood for some minutes leaning against a pillar to collect her senses. Then her first thought was of consulting the Drummonds, and she impetuously dashed back to her own apartments and ordered her palfrey and suite to be ready instantly to take her to Châlons.

Madame la Dauphine's palfreys were all gone to Châlons to be shod. In fact, there were some games going on there, and trusting to the easy-going habits of their mistress, almost all her attendants

had lounged off thither, even the maidens, as well as the pages, who felt Madame de Ste. Petronelle's sharp eyes no longer over them.

'Tell me,' said Margaret, to the one lame, frightened old man who alone seemed able to reply to her call, 'do you know who commanded the escort which were with my sisters, the Princesses of Scotland?'

The old man threw up his hands. How should he know? 'The escort was of the savage Scottish archers.'

'I know that; but can you not tell who they were—nor their commander?'

'Ah! Madame knows that their names are such as no Christian ears can understand, nor lips speak!'

'I had thought it was the Sire Andrew Gordon who was to go with them. He with the blue housings on the dapple grey.'

'No, Madame; I heard the Captain Mercour say Monsieur le Dauphin had other orders for him. It

was the little dark one—how call they him ?—ah ! with a more reasonable name—Le Halle, who led the party of Mesdames. Madame ! Madame ! let me call some of Madame's women ! '

'No, no,' gasped Margaret, knowing indeed that none whom she wished to see were within call. 'Thanks, Jean, here—now go,' and she flung him a coin.

She knew now that whatever had befallen her sisters had been by the connivance if not the contrivance of her husband, unwilling to have the charge and the portioning of the two penniless maidens imposed upon him. And what might not that fate be, betrayed into the hands of one who had so deadly a blood-feud with their parents! For Hall was the son of one of the men whose daggers had slain James I, and whose crime had been visited with such vindictive cruelty by Queen Joanna. The man's eyes had often scowled at her, as if he longed

for vengeance — and thus had it been granted him.

Margaret, with understanding to appreciate Louis's extraordinary ability, had idolised him throughout in spite of his constant coldness and the satire with which he treated all her higher tastes and aspirations, continually throwing her in and back upon herself, and blighting her instincts wherever they turned. She had accepted all this as his superiority to her folly, and though the thwarted and unfostered inclinations in her strong unstained nature had occasioned those aberrations and distorted impulses which brought blame on her, she had accepted everything hitherto as her own fault, and believed in, and adored the image she had made of him throughout. Now it was as if her idol had turned suddenly into a viper in her bosom, not only stinging her by implied acquiescence in the slanders upon her discretion, if not upon her fair fame, but actually having

betrayed her innocent sisters by means of the deadly enemy of their family—to what fate she knew not.

To act became an immediate need to the unhappy Dauphiness at once, as the only vent to her own misery, and because she must without loss of time do something for the succour of her young sisters, or ascertain their fate.

She did not spend a moment's thought on the censure any imprudent measure of her own might bring on her, but hastily summoning the only tire-woman within reach, she exchanged her blue and gold embroidered robe for a dark serge which she wore on days of penance, with a mantle and hood of the same, and, to Linette's horror and dismay, bade her attend her on foot to the Hôtel de Terreforte, in Châlons.

Linette was in no position to remonstrate, but could only follow, as the lady, wrapped in her cloak, descended the steps, and crossed the empty hall.

The porter let her pass unquestioned, but there were a few guards at the great gateway, and one shouted, 'Whither away, pretty Linette?'

Margaret raised her hood and looked full at him, and he fell back. He knew her, and knew that Madame la Dauphine did strange things. The road was stony and bare and treeless, unfrequented at first, and it was very sultry, the sun shining with a heavy melting heat on Margaret's weighty garments; but she hurried on, never feeling the heat, or hearing Linette's endeavours to draw her attention to the heavy bank of gray clouds tinged with lurid red gradually rising, and whence threatening growls of thunder were heard from time to time. She really seemed to rush forward, and poor, panting Linette toiled after her, feeling ready to drop, while the way was as yet unobstructed, as the two beautiful steeples of the Cathedral and Notre Dame de l'Épine rose before them; but after a time, as they drew nearer,

the road became obstructed by carts, waggons, donkeys, crowded with country-folks and their wares, with friars and ragged beggars, all pressing into the town, and jostling one another and the two foot-passengers all the more as rain-drops began to fall, and the thunder sounded nearer.

Margaret had been used to walking, but it was all within parks and pleasances, and she was not at all used to being pushed about and jostled. Linette knew how to make her way far better, and it was well for them that their dark dresses and hoods and Linette's elderly face gave the idea of their being votaresses of some sacred order, and so secured them from actual personal insult; but as they clung together they were thrust aside and pushed about, while the throng grew thicker, the streets narrower, the storm heavier, the air more stifling and unsavoury.

A sudden rush nearly knocked them down,

driving them under a gurgoyle, whose spout was streaming with wet, and completed the drenching; but there was a porch and an open door of a church close behind, and into this Linette dragged her mistress. Dripping, breathless, bruised, she leant against a pillar, not going forward, for others, much more gaily dressed, had taken refuge there, and were chattering away, for little reverence was paid at that date to the sanctity of buildings.

'Will the King be there, think you?' eagerly asked a young girl, who had been anxiously wiping the wet from her pink kirtle.

'Certes—he is to give the prizes,' replied a portly dame in crimson.

'And the Lady of Beauty? I long to see her.'

'Her beauty is passing—except that which was better worth the solid castle the King gave her,' laughed the stout citizen, who seemed to be in charge of them.

'The Dauphiness, too—will she be there?'

'Ah, the Dauphiness!' said the elder woman, with a meaning sound and shake of the head.

'Scandal—evil tongues!' growled the man.

'Nay, Master Jerôme, there's no denying it, for a merchant of Bourges told me. She runs about the country on foot, like no discreet woman, let alone a princess, with a good-for-nothing minstrel after her. Ah, you may grunt and make signs, but I had it from the Countess de Craylièrre's own tire-woman, who came for a bit of lace, that the Dauphin is about to divorce her, for the Sire Jamet de Tillay caught her kissing the minstrel on a bench in the garden at Nanci.'

'I would not trust the Sire de Tillay's word. He is in debt to every merchant of the place—a smooth-tongued deceiver. Belike he is bribed to defame the poor lady, that the Dauphin may rid himself of a childless wife.'

The young girl was growing restless, declaring that the rain was over, and that they should miss the getting good places at the show. Margaret had stood all this time leaning against her pillar, with hands clenched together and teeth firm set, trying to control the shuddering of horror and indignation that went through her whole frame. She started convulsively when Linette moved after the burgher, but put a force upon herself when she perceived that it was in order to inquire how best to reach the Hôtel de Terreforte.

He pointed to the opposite door of the church, and Linette, reconnoitring and finding that it led into a street entirely quiet and deserted, went back to the Dauphiness, whom she found sunk on her knees, stiff and dazed.

'Come, Madame,' she entreated, trying to raise her, 'the Hôtel de Terreforte is near, these houses shelter us, and the rain is nearly over.'

Margaret did not move at first; then she looked up and said, 'What was it that they said, Linette?'

'Oh! no matter what they said, Madame; they were ignorant creatures, who knew not what they were talking about. Come, you are wet, you are exhausted. This good lady will know how to help you.'

'There is no help in man,' said Margaret, wildly stretching out her arms. 'Oh, God! help me—a desolate woman — and my sisters! Betrayed! betrayed!'

Very much alarmed, Linette at last succeeded in raising her to her feet, and guiding her, half-blinded as she seemed, to the portal of the Hôtel de Terre-forte—an archway leading into a courtyard. It was by great good fortune that the very first person who stood within it was old Andrew of the Cleugh, who despised all French sports in comparison with the completeness of his master's equipment, and

was standing at the gate, about to issue forth in quest of leather to mend a defective strap. His eyes fell on the forlorn wanderer, who had no longer energy to keep her hood forward. 'My certie!' he exclaimed, in utter amaze.

The Scottish words and voice seemed to revive Margaret, and she tottered forward, exclaiming, 'Oh! good man, help me! take me to the Lady.'

Fortunately the Lady of Glenuskie, being much busied in preparations for her journey, had sent Annis to the sports with the Lady of Terreforte, and was ready to receive the poor, drenched, exhausted being, who almost stumbled into her motherly arms, weeping bitterly, and incoherently moaning something about her sisters, and her husband, and 'betrayed.'

Old Christie was happily also at home, and dry clothing, a warm posset, and the Lady's own bed, perhaps still more her soothing caresses, brought

Margaret back to the power of explaining her distress intelligibly—at least as regarded her sisters. She had discovered that their escort had been that bitter foe of their house, Robert Hall, and she verily believed that he had betrayed her sisters into the hands of some of the *routiers* who infested the roads.

Dame Lilias could not but think it only too likely; but she said 'the worst that could well befall the poor lassies in that case would be their detention until a ransom was paid, and if their situation was known, the King, the Dauphin, and the Duke of Brittany would be certain one or other to rescue them by force of arms, if not to raise the money.' She saw how Margaret shuddered at the name of the Dauphin.

'Oh! I have jewels—pearls—gold,' cried Margaret. 'I could pay the sum without asking any one! Only, where are they, where are they? What are they not enduring—the dear maidens!

Would that I had never let them out of my sight!'

'Would that I had not!' echoed Dame Lilias. 'But cheer up, dear Lady, Madame de Ste. Petronelle is with them and will watch over them; and she knows the ways of the country, and how to deal with these robbers, whoever they may be. She will have a care of them.'

But though the Lady of Glenuskie tried to cheer the unhappy princess, she was full of consternation and misgivings as to the fate of her young cousins, whom she loved heartily, and she was relieved when, in accordance with the summons that she had sent, her husband's spurs were heard ringing on the stair.

He heard the story with alarm. He knew that Sir Andrew Gordon had been told off to lead the convoy, and had even conversed with him on the subject.

'Who exchanged him for Hall?' he inquired.

'Oh, do not ask,' cried the unhappy Margaret, covering her face with her hands, and the shrewder Scots folk began to understand, as glances passed between them, though they spared her.

She had intended throwing herself at the feet of the King, who had never been unkind to her, and imploring his succour; but Sir Patrick brought word that the King and Dauphin were going forth together to visit the Abbot of a shrine at no great distance, and as soon as she heard that the Dauphin was with his father, she shrank together, and gave up her purpose for the present. Indeed, Sir Patrick thought it advisable for him to endeavour to discover what had really become of the princesses before applying to the King, or making their loss public. Nor was the Dauphiness in a condition to repair to Court. Dame Lilias longed to keep her and nurse and comfort her that evening; but while the spiteful whispers of De Tillay were abroad, it

was needful to be doubly prudent, and the morning's escapade must if possible be compensated by a public return to Château le Surry. So Margaret was placed on Lady Drummond's palfrey, and accompanied home by all the attendants who could be got together. She could hardly sit upright by the time the short ride was over, for pain in the side and stitch in her breath. Again Lady Drummond would have stayed with her, but the Countess de Craylièrre, who had been extremely offended and scandalised by the expedition of the Dauphiness, made her understand that no one could remain there except by the invitation of the Dauphin, and showed great displeasure at any one but herself attempting the care of Madame la Dauphine, who, as all knew, was subject to megrims.

Margaret entreated her *belle cousine* to return in the morning and tell her what had been done, and Dame Lilias accordingly set forth with Annis

immediately after mass and breakfast with the news that Sir Patrick had taken counsel with the Sieur de Terreforte, and that they had got together such armed attendants as they could, and started with their sons for Nanci, where they hoped to discover some traces of the lost ladies.

Indeed, he had brought his wife on his way, and was waiting in the court in case the Princess should wish to see him before he went; but Lilias found poor Margaret far too ill for this to be of any avail. She had tossed about all night, and now was lying partly raised on a pile of embroidered, gold-edged pillows, under an enormous, stiff, heavy quilt, gorgeous with heraldic colours and devices, her pale cheeks flushed with fever, her breath catching painfully, and with a terrible short cough, murmuring strange words about her sisters, and about cruel tongues. A crowd of both sexes and all ranks filled the room, gazing and listening.

She knew her cousin at her entrance, clasped her hand tight, and seemed to welcome her native tongue, and understand her assurance that Sir Patrick was gone to seek her sisters; but she wandered off into, 'Don't let him ask Jamet. Ah, Katie Douglas, keep the door! They are coming.'

Her husband, returning from the morning mass, had way made for him as he advanced to the bed, and again her understanding partly returned, as he said in his low, dry voice, 'How now, Madame?'

She looked up at him, held out her hot hand, and gasped, 'Oh, sir, sir, where are they?'

'Be more explicit, ma mie,' he said, with an inscrutable face.

'You know, you know. Oh, husband, my Lord, you do not believe it. Say you do not believe it. Send the whispering fiend away. He has hidden my sisters.'

'She raves,' said Louis. 'Has the chirurgeon been with her?'

'He is even now about to bleed her, my Lord,' said Madame de Craylièrre, 'and so I have sent for the King's own physician.'

Louis's barber-surgeon (not yet Olivier le Dain) was a little, crooked old Jew, at sight of whom Margaret screamed as if she took him for the whispering fiend. He would fain have cleared the room and relieved the air, but this was quite beyond his power; the ladies, knights, pages and all chose to remain and look on at the struggles of the poor patient, while Madame de Craylièrre and Lady Drummond held her fast and forced her to submit. Her husband, who alone could have prevailed, did not or would not speak the word, but shrugged his shoulders and left the room, carrying off with him at least his own attendants.

When she saw her blood flow, Margaret ex-

claimed, 'Ah, traitors, take me instead of my father —only—a priest.'

Presently she fainted, and after partly reviving, seemed to doze, and this, being less interesting, caused many of the spectators to depart.

When she awoke she was quite herself, and this was well, for the King came to visit her. Margaret was fond of her father-in-law, who had always been kind to her; but she was too ill, and speech hurt her too much, to allow her to utter clearly all that oppressed her.

'My sisters! my poor sisters!' she moaned.

'Ah! ma belle fille, fear not. All will be well with them. No doubt, my good brother René has detained them, that Madame Eleanore may study a little more of his music and painting. We will send a courier to Nanci, who will bring good news of them,' said the King, in a caressing voice which soothed, if it did not satisfy, the sufferer.

She spoke out some thanks, and he added, 'They may come any moment, daughter, and that will cheer your little heart, and make you well. Only take courage, child, and here is my good physician, Maître Bertrand, come to heal you.'

Margaret still held the King's hand, and sought to detain him. 'Beau père, beau père,' she said, 'you will not believe them! You will silence them.'

'Whom, what, ma mie?'

'The evil-speakers. Ah! Jamet.'

'I believe nothing my fair daughter tells me not to believe.'

'Ah! sire, he speaks against me. He says——'

'Hush! hush, child. Whoever vexes my daughter shall have his tongue slit for him. But here we must give place to Maître Bertrand.'

Maître Bertrand was a fat and stolid personage, who, nevertheless, had a true doctor's squabble with the Jew Samiel and drove him out. His treatment

was to exclude all the air possible, make the patient breathe all sorts of essences, and apply freshly-killed pigeons to the painful side.

Margaret did not mend under this method. She begged for Samiel, who had several times before relieved her in slight illnesses; but she was given to understand that the Dauphin would not permit him to interfere with Maître Bertrand.

'Ah!' she said to Dame Lilias, in their own language, 'my husband calls Bertrand an old fool! He does not wish me to recover! A childless wife is of no value. He would have me dead! And so would I—if my fame were cleared. If my sisters were found! Oh! my Lord, my Lord, I loved him so!'

Poor Margaret! Such was her cry, whether sane or delirious, hour after hour, day after day. Only when delirious she rambled into Scotch and talked of Perth; went over again her father's murder, or

fancied her sisters in the hands of some of the ferocious chieftains of the North, and screamed to Sir Patrick or to Geordie Douglas to deliver them. Where was all the chivalry of the Bleeding Heart?

Or, again, she would piteously plead her own cause with her husband—not that he was present, a morning glance into her room sufficed him; but she would excuse her own eager folly—telling him not to be angered with her, who loved him wholly and entirely, and begging him to silence the wicked tongues that defamed her.

When sensible she was very weak, and capable of saying very little; but she clung fast to Lady Drummond, and, Dauphin or no Dauphin, Dame Lilias was resolved on remaining and watching her day and night, Madame de Craylièrre becoming ready to leave the nursing to her when it became severe.

The King came to see his daughter-in-law almost every day, and always spoke to her in the same kindly but unmeaning vein, assuring her that her sisters must be safe, and promising to believe nothing against herself; but, as the Lady of Glenuskie knew from Olivier de Terreforte, taking no measures either to discover the fate of the princesses or to banish and silence Jamet de Tillay, though it was all over the Court that the Dauphiness was dying for love of Alain Chartier. Was it that his son prevented him from acting, or was it the strange indifference and indolence that always made Charles the Well-Served bestir himself far too late?

Any way, Margaret of Scotland was broken-hearted, utterly weary of life, and with no heart or spirit to rally from the illness caused by the chill of her hasty walk. She only wished to live long enough to know that her sisters were safe, see them again, and send them under safe care to Brittany.

She exacted a promise from Dame Lilias never to leave them again till they were in safe hands, with good husbands, or back in Scotland with their brother and good Archbishop Kennedy. 'Bid Jeanie never despise a true heart; better, far better, than a crown,' she sighed.

Louis concerned himself much that all the offices of religion should be provided. He attended the mass daily celebrated in her room, and caused priests to pray in the farther end continually. Lady Drummond, who had not given up hope, and believed that good tidings of her sisters might almost be a cure, thought that he really hurried on the last offices, at which he devoutly assisted. However, the confession seemed to have given Margaret much comfort. She told Dame Lilias that the priest had shown her how to make an offering to God of her sore suffering from slander and evil report, and reminded her that to endure it

patiently was treading in the steps of her Master. She was resolved, therefore, to make no further struggle nor complaint, but to trust that her silence and endurance would be accepted. She could pray for her sisters and their safety, and she would endeavour to yield up even that last earthly desire to be certified of their safety, and to see their bonnie faces once more. So there she lay, a being formed by nature and intellect to have been the inspiring helpmeet of some noble-hearted man, the stay of a kingdom, the education of all around her in all that was beautiful and refined, but cast away upon one of the most mean and selfish-hearted of mankind, who only perceived her great qualities to hate and dread their manifestation in a woman, to crush them by his contempt; and finally, though he did not originate the cruel slander that broke her heart, he envenomed it by his sneers, so as to deprive her of all power of resistance.

The lot of Margaret of Scotland was as piteous as that of any of the doomed house of Stewart. And there the Lady of Glenuskie and Annis de Terreforte watched her sinking day by day, and still there were no tidings of Jean and Eleanor from Nanci, no messenger from Sir Patrick to tell where the search was directed.

CHAPTER IX

BALCHENBURG

'In these wylde deserts where she now abode
There dwelt a salvage nation, which did live
On stealth and spoil, and making nightly rade
Into their neighbours' borders.'—SPENSER.

A TERRIBLE legacy of the Hundred Years' War, which, indeed, was not yet entirely ended by the Peace of Tours, was the existence of bands of men trained to nothing but war and rapine, and devoid of any other means of subsistence than freebooting on the peasantry or travellers, whence they were known as *routiers*—highwaymen, and *écorcheurs*—flayers. They were a fearful scourge to France in the early part of the reign of Charles VII, as, indeed, they had been at every interval of peace

ever since the battle of Creçi, and they really made a state of warfare preferable to the unhappy provinces, or at least to those where it was not actually raging. In a few years more the Dauphin contrived to delude many of them into an expedition, where he abandoned them and left them to be massacred, after which he formed the rest into the nucleus of a standing army; but at this time they were the terror of travellers, who only durst go about any of the French provinces in well-armed and large parties.

The domains of King René, whether in Lorraine or Provence, were, however, reckoned as fairly secure, but from the time the little troop, with the princesses among them, had started from Nanci, Madame de Ste. Petronelle became uneasy. She looked up at the sun, which was shining in her face, more than once, and presently drew the portly mule she was riding towards George Douglas.

'Sir,' she said, 'you are the ladies' squire?'

'I have that honour, Madame.'

'And a Scot?'

'Even so.'

'I ask you, which way you deem that we are riding?'

'Eastward, Madame, if the sun is to be trusted. Mayhap somewhat to the south.'

'Yea; and which side lies Châlons?'

This was beyond George's geography. He looked up with open mouth and shook his head. 'Westward!' said the lady impressively. 'And what's yon in the distance?'

'Save that this land is as flat as a bannock, I'd have said 'twas mountains.'

'Mountains they are, young man!' said Madame de Ste. Petronelle emphatically—'the hills between Lorraine and Alsace, which we should be leaving behind us.'

'Is there treachery?' asked George, reining up his horse.

'Ken ye who is the captain of this escort?'

'His name is Hall; he is thick with the Dauphin. Ha! Madame, is he sib to him that aided in the slaughter of Fastern's Eve night?'

'Just, laddie. 'Tis own son to him that Queen Jean made dae sic a fearful penance. What are ye doing?'

'I'll run the villain through, and turn back to Nanci while yet there is time,' said George, his hand on his sword.

'Hold, ye daft bodie! That would but bring all the lave on ye. There's nothing for it but to go on warily, and maybe at the next halt we might escape from them.'

But almost while Madame de Ste. Petronelle spoke there was a cry, and from a thicket there burst out a band of men in steel headpieces and

buff jerkins, led by two or three horsemen. There was a confused outcry of 'St. Denys! St. Andrew!' on one side, 'Yield!' on the other. Madame's rein was seized, and though she drew her dagger, her hand was caught before she could strike, by a fellow who cried, 'None of that, you old hag, or it shall be the worse for thee!'

'St. Andrew! St. Andrew!' screamed Eleanor. 'Scots, to the rescue of your King's sisters!'

'Douglas—Douglas, help!' cried Jean.

But each was surrounded by a swarm of the ruffians; and as George Douglas hastily pushed down some with his horse, and struck down one or two with his sword, he was felled by a mighty blow on the head, and the *écorcheurs* thronged over him, dragging him off his horse, while others surrounded the three ladies. Whether there was any resistance on the part of the Scottish archers, their escort, they could not tell; they only heard a

tumult of shouts and cries, and found rude hands holding them on their horses and dragging them among the trees. Their screams for help were answered by a gruff voice from a horseman, evidently the leader of the troop. 'Hold that noise, Lady! No ill is meant to you, but you must come with us. No; screams are useless! There's none to come to you. Stop them, or I must!'

'There is none!' said Madame de Ste. Petronelle's voice in her own tongue; 'best cease to cry, and not fash the loons more.'

The sisters heard, and in her natural tone Eleanor said in French, 'Sir, know you who you are thus treating? The King's daughter — sisters of the Dauphiness!'

He laughed. 'Full well,' he answered, in very German-sounding French.

'Such usage will bring the vengeance of the King and Dauphin on you.'

He laughed yet more loudly. His face was concealed by his visor, but the ill-fitting armour and great roan horse made Jean recognise the knight whose eyes had dwelt on her so boldly at the tournament, and she added her voice.

'Your Duke of the Tirol will punish this.'

'He has enough to do to mind his own business,' was the answer.

'Come, fair one, hold your tongue! There's no help for it, and the less trouble you give us the better it will be for you.'

'But our squire!' Jean exclaimed, looking about her. 'Where is he?'

Again there was a rude laugh.

'Showed fight. Disposed of. See there!' and Jean could not but recognise the great gray horse from the Mearns that George Douglas had always ridden. Had she brought the gallant youth to this, and without word or look to reward his devotion?

She gave one low cry, and bowed her head, grieved and sick at heart. While Eleanor, on her side, exclaimed, 'Felon, thou hast slain a nobleman's brave heir! Disgrace to knighthood!'

'Peace, maid, or we will find means to silence thy tongue,' growled the leader; and Madame de Ste. Petronelle interposed, 'Whisht—whisht, my bairn; dinna anger them.' For she saw that there was more disposition to harshness towards Eleanor than towards Jean, whose beauty seemed to command a sort of regard.

Eleanor took the hint. Her eyes filled with tears, and her bosom heaved at the thought of the requital of the devotion of the brave young man, lying in his blood, so far from his father and his home; but she would not have these ruffians see her weep and think it was for herself, and she proudly straightened herself in her saddle and choked down the rising sob.

On, on they went, at first through the wood by a tangled path, then over a wide moor covered with heather, those mountains, which had at first excited the old lady's alarm, growing more distinct in front of them; going faster, too, so that the men who held the reins were half running, till the ground began to rise and grow rougher, when, at an order in German from the knight, a man leapt on in front of each lady to guide her horse.

Where were they going? No one deigned to ask except Madame de Ste. Petronelle, and her guard only grunted, '*Nicht verstand*,' or something equivalent.

A thick mass of wood rose before them, a stream coming down from it, and here there was a halt, the ladies were lifted down, and the party, who numbered about twelve men, refreshed themselves with the provisions that the Infanta Yolande had hospitably furnished for her guests. The knight awkwardly,

but not uncivilly, offered a share to his captives, but Eleanor would have moved them off with disdain, and Jean sat with her head in her hands, and would not look up.

The old lady remonstrated. 'Eat—eat,' she said. 'We shall need all our spirit and strength, and there's no good in being weak and spent with fasting.'

Eleanor saw the prudence of this, and accepted the food and wine offered to her; but Jean seemed unable to swallow anything but a long draught of wine and water, and scarcely lifted her head from her sister's shoulder. Eleanor held her rosary, and though the words she conned over were Latin, all her heart was one silent prayer for protection and deliverance, and commendation of that brave youth's soul to his Maker.

The knight kept out of their way, evidently not wishing to be interrogated, and he seemed to be the

only person who could speak French after a fashion. By and by they were remounted and led across some marshy ground, where the course of the stream was marked by tall ferns and weeds, then into a wood of beeches, where the sun lighted the delicate young foliage, while the horses trod easily among the brown fallen leaves. This gave place to another wood of firs, and though the days were fairly long, here it was rapidly growing dark under the heavy branches, so that the winding path could only have been followed by those well used to it. As it became steeper and more stony the trees became thinner, and against the eastern sky could be seen, dark and threatening, the turrets of a castle above a steep, smooth-looking, grassy slope, one of the hills, in fact, called from their shape by the French *ballons.*

Just then Jean's horse, weary and unused to mountaineering, stumbled. The man at its head

was perhaps not attending to it, for the sudden pull he gave the rein only precipitated the fall. The horse was up again in a moment, but Jean lay still. Her sister and the lady were at her side in a moment; but when they tried to raise her she cried out, at first inarticulately, then, 'Oh, my arm!' and on another attempt to lift her she fainted away. The knight was in the meantime swearing in German at the man who had been leading her, then asking anxiously in French how it was with the maiden, as she lay with her head on her sister's lap, Madame answered, 'Hurt—much hurt.'

'But not to the death?'

'Who knows? No thanks to you.' He tendered a flask where only a few drops of wine remained, growling something or other about the *Schelm*; and when Jean's lips had been moistened with it she opened her eyes, but sobbed with pain, and only entreated to be let alone. This, of course,

was impossible; but with double consternation Eleanor looked up at what, in the gathering darkness, seemed a perpendicular height. The knight made them understand that all that could be done was to put the sufferer on horseback and support her there in the climb upwards, and he proceeded without further parley to lift her up, not entirely without heed to her screams and moans, for he emitted such sounds as those with which he might have soothed his favourite horse, as he placed her on the back of a stout, little, strong, mountain pony. Eleanor held her there, and he walked at its head. Madame de Ste. Petronelle would fain have kept up on the other side, but she had lost her mountain legs, and could not have got up at all without the mule on which she was replaced. Eleanor's height enabled her to hold her arm round her sister, and rest her head on her shoulder, though how she kept on in the dark, dragged along as it were blindly up

and up, she never could afterwards recollect; but at last pine torches came down to meet them, there was a tumult of voices, a yawning black archway in front, a light or two flitting about. Jean lay helplessly against her, only groaning now and then; then, as the arch seemed to swallow them up, Eleanor was aware of an old man, lame and rugged, who bawled loud and seemed to be the highly displeased master; of calls for 'Barbe,' and then of an elderly, homely-looking woman, who would have assisted in taking Jean off the pony but that the knight was already in the act. However, he resigned her to her sister and Madame de Ste. Petronelle, while Barbe led the way, lamp in hand. It was just as well poor Jeanie remained unconscious or nearly so while she was conveyed up the narrow stairs to a round chamber, not worse in furnishing than that at Dunbar, though very unlike their tapestried rooms at Nanci.

It was well to be able to lay her down at all,

and old Barbe was not only ready and pitying, but spoke French. She had some wine ready, and had evidently done her best in the brief warning to prepare a bed. The tone of her words convinced Madame de Ste. Petronelle that at any rate she was no enemy. So she was permitted to assist in the investigation of the injuries, which proved to be extensive bruises and a dislocated shoulder. Both had sufficient experience in rough-and-ready surgery, as well as sufficient strength, for them to be able to pull in the shoulder, while Eleanor, white and trembling, stood on one side with the lamp, and a little flaxen-haired girl of twelve years old held bandages and ran after whatever Barbe asked for.

This done, and Jean having been arranged as comfortably as might be, Barbe obeyed some peremptory summonses from without, and presently came back.

'The seigneur desires to speak with the ladies,'

she said; 'but I have told him that they cannot leave *la pauvrette*, and are too much spent to speak with him to-night. I will bring them supper and they shall rest.'

'We thank you,' said Madame de Ste. Petronelle. 'Only, *de grace*, tell us where we are, and who this seigneur is, and what he wants with us poor women.'

'This is the Castle of Balchenburg,' was the reply; 'the seigneur is the Baron thereof. For the next'—she shrugged her shoulders—'it must be one of Baron Rudiger's ventures. But I must go and fetch the ladies some supper. Ah! the demoiselle surely needs it.'

'And some water!' entreated Eleanor.

'Ah yes,' she replied; 'Trudchen shall bring some.'

The little girl presently reappeared with a pitcher as heavy as she could carry. She could not under-

stand French, but looked much interested, and very eager and curious as she brought in several of the bundles and mails of the travellers.

'Thank the saints,' cried the lady, 'they do not mean to strip us of our clothes!'

'They have stolen us, and that is enough for them,' said Eleanor.

Jean lay apparently too much exhausted to take notice of what was going on, and they hoped she might sleep, while they moved about quietly. The room seemed to be a cell in the hollow of the turret, and there were two loophole windows, to which Eleanor climbed up, but she could see nothing but the stars. 'Ah! yonder is the Plough, just as when we looked out at it at Dunbar o'er the sea!' she sighed. 'The only friendly thing I can see! Ah! but the same God and the saints are with us still!' and she clasped her rosary's cross as she returned to her sister, who was sighing out an entreaty for water.

By and by the woman returned, and with her the child. She made a low reverence as she entered, having evidently been informed of the rank of her captives. A white napkin was spread over the great chest that served for a table — a piece of civilisation such as the Dunbar captivity had not known — three beechen bowls and spoons, and a porringer containing a not unsavoury stew of a fowl in broth thickened with meal. They tried to make their patient swallow a little broth, but without much success, though Eleanor in the mountain air had become famished enough to make a hearty meal, and feel more cheered and hopeful after it. Barbe's evident sympathy and respect were an element of comfort, and when Jean revived enough to make some inquiry after poor Skywing, and it was translated into French, there was an assurance that the hawk was cared for—hopes even given of its presence. Barbe was not only compassionate, but ready

to answer all the questions in her power. She was Burgundian, but her home having been harried in the wars, her husband had taken service as a man-at-arms with the Baron of Balchenburg, she herself becoming the bower-woman of the Baroness, now dead. Since the death of the good lady, whose influence had been some restraint, everything had become much rougher and wilder, and the lords of the castle, standing on the frontier as it did, had become closely connected with the feuds of Germany as well as the wars in France. The old Baron had been lamed in a raid into Burgundy, since which time he had never left home; and Barbe's husband had been killed, her sons either slain or seeking their fortune elsewhere, so that nothing was left to her but her little daughter Gertrude, for whose sake she earnestly longed to find her way down to more civilised and godly life; but she was withheld by the difficulties in the path, and the extreme improba-

bility of finding a maintenance anywhere else, as well as by a certain affection for her two Barons, and doubts what they would do without her, since the elder was in broken health and the younger had been her nursling. In fact, she was the highest female authority in the castle, and kept up whatever semblance of decency or propriety remained since her mistress's death. All this came out in the way of grumbling or lamentation, in the satisfaction of having some woman to confide in, though her young master had made her aware of the rank of his captives. Every one, it seemed, had been taken by surprise. He was in the habit of making expeditions on his own account, and bringing home sometimes lawless comrades or followers, sometimes booty; but this time, after taking great pains to furbish up a suit of armour brought home long ago, he had set forth to the festivities at Nanci. The lands and castle were so situated, that the old Baron had

done homage for the greater part to Sigismund as Duke of Elsass, and for another portion to King René as Duke of Lorraine, as whose vassal the young Baron had appeared. No more had been heard of him till one of his men hurried up with tidings that Herr Rudiger had taken a bevy of captives, with plenty of spoil, but that one was a lady much hurt, for whom Barbe must prepare her best.

Since this, Barbe had learnt from her young master that the injured lady was the sister of the Dauphiness, and a king's daughter, and that every care must be taken of her and her sister, for he was madly in love with her, and meant her to be his wife.

Eleanor and Madame de Ste. Petronelle cried out at this with horror, in a stifled way, as Barbe whispered it.

'Too high, too dangerous game for him, I know,'

said the old woman. 'So said his father, who was not a little dismayed when he heard who these ladies were.'

'The King, my brother, the Dauphin, the Duke of Brittany——' began Eleanor.

'Alas! the poor boy would never have ventured it but for encouragement,' sighed Barbe. 'Treacherous I say it must be!'

'I knew there was treachery,' exclaimed Madame de Ste. Petronelle, 'so soon as I found which way our faces were turned.'

'But who could or would betray us?' demanded Eleanor.

'You need not ask that, when your escort was led by Andrew Hall,' returned the elder lady. 'Poor young George of the Red Peel had only just told me so, when the caitiffs fell on him, and he came to his bloody death.'

'Hall! Then I marvel not,' said Eleanor, in a

low, awe-struck voice. 'My brother the Dauphin could not have known.'

The old Scotswoman refrained from uttering her belief that he knew only too well, but by the time all this had been said Barbe was obliged to leave them, having arranged for the night that Eleanor should sleep in the big bed beside her sister, and their lady across it at their feet—a not uncommon arrangement in those days.

Sleep, however, in spite of weariness, was only to be had in snatches, for poor Jean was in much pain, and very feverish, besides being greatly terrified at their situation, and full of grief and self-reproach for the poor young Master of Angus, never dozing off for a moment without fancying she saw him dying and upbraiding her, and for the most part tossing in a restless misery that required the attendance of one or both. She had never known ailment before, and was thus all the more wretched and

impatient, alarming and distressing Eleanor extremely, though Madame de Ste. Petronelle declared it was only a matter of course, and that the lassie would soon be well.

'Ah, Madame, our comforter and helper,' said Elleen.

'Call me no French names, dearies. Call me the Leddy Lindsay or Dame Elspeth, as I should be at home. We be all Scots here, in one sore stour. If I could win a word to my son, Ritchie, he would soon have us out of this place.'

'Would not Barbe help us to a messenger?'

'I doubt it. She would scarce bring trouble on her lords; but we might be worse off than with her.'

'Why does she not come? I want some more drink,' moaned Jean.

Barbe did come, and, moreover, brought not only water but some tisane of herbs that was good for

fever and had been brewing all night, and she was wonderfully good-humoured at the patient's fretful refusal, though between coaxing and authority 'Leddy Lindsay' managed to get it taken at last. After Margaret's experience of her as a stern duenna, her tenderness in illness and trouble was a real surprise.

No keys were turned on them, but there was little disposition to go beyond the door which opened on the stone stair in the gray wall. The view from the windows revealed that they were very high up. There was a bit of castle wall to be seen below, and beyond a sea of forest, the dark masses of pine throwing out the lighter, more delicate sweeps of beech, and pale purple distance beyond — not another building within view, giving a sense of vast solitude to Eleanor's eyes, more dreary than the sea at Dunbar, and far more changeless. An occasional bird was all the variety to be hoped for.

By and by Barbe brought a message that her masters requested the ladies' presence at the meal, a dinner, in fact, served about an hour before noon. Eleanor greatly demurred, but Barbe strongly advised consent, 'Or my young lord will be coming up here,' she said; 'they both wish to have speech of you, and would have been here before now, if my old lord were not so lame, and the young one so shy, the poor child!'

'Shy,' exclaimed Eleanor, 'after what he has dared to do to us!'

'All the more for that very reason,' said Barbe.

'True,' returned Madame; 'the savage who is most ferocious in his acts is most bashful in his breeding.'

'How should my poor boy have had any breeding up here in the forests?' demanded Barbe. 'Oh, if he had only fixed his mind on a maiden of his own degree, she might have brought the good days

back; but alas, now he will be only bringing about his own destruction, which the saints avert.'

It was agreed that Eleanor had better make as royal and imposing an appearance as possible, so instead of the plain camlet riding kirtles that she and Lady Lindsay had worn, she donned a heraldic sort of garment, a tissue of white and gold thread, with the red lion ramping on back and breast, and the double tressure edging all the hems, part of the outfit furnished at her great-uncle's expense in London, but too gaudy for her taste, and she added to her already considerable height by the tall, veiled headgear that had been despised as unfashionable.

Jean from her bed cried out that she looked like Pharaoh's daughter in the tapestry, and consented to be left to the care of little Trudchen, since Madame de Ste. Petronelle must act attendant, and Barbe evidently thought her young master's good

behaviour might be the better secured by her presence.

So, at the bottom of the narrow stone stair, Eleanor shook out her plumes, the attendant lady arranged her veil over her yellow hair, and drew out her short train and long hanging sleeves, a little behind the fashion, but the more dignified, as she swept into the hall, and though her heart beat desperately, holding her head stiff and high, and looking every inch a princess, the shrewd Scotch lady behind her flattered herself that the two Barons did look a little daunted by the bearing of the creature they had caught.

The father, who had somewhat the look of an old fox, limped forward with a less ungraceful bow than the son, who had more of the wolf. Some greeting was mumbled, and the old man would have taken her hand to lead her to the highest place at table, but she would not give it.

'I am no willing guest of yours, sir,' she said, perhaps alarmed at her own boldness, but drawing herself up with great dignity. 'I desire to know by what right my sister and I, king's daughters, on our way to King Charles's Court, have thus been seized and detained?'

'We do not stickle as to rights here on the borders, Lady,' said the elder Baron in bad French; 'it would be wiser to abate a little of that *outre-cuidance* of yours, and listen to our terms.'

'A captive has no choice save to listen,' returned Eleanor; 'but as to speaking of terms, my brothers-in-law, the Dauphin and the Duke of Brittany, may have something to say to them.'

'Exactly so,' replied the old Baron, in a tone of some irony, which she did not like. 'Now, Lady, our terms are these, but understand first that all this affair is none of my seeking, but my son here has been backed up in it by some whom'—on a

grunt from Sir Rudiger—'there is no need to name. He—the more fool he—has taken a fancy to your sister, though, if all reports be true, she has nought but her royal blood, not so much as a *denier* for a dowry nor as ransom for either of you. However, this I will overlook, dead loss as it is to me and mine, and so your sister, so soon as she recovers from her hurt, will become my son's wife, and I will have you and your lady safely conducted without ransom to the borders of Normandy or Brittany, as you may list.'

'And think you, sir,' returned Eleanor, quivering with indignation, 'that the daughter of a hundred kings is like to lower herself by listening to the suit of a petty robber baron of the Marches?'

'I do not think! but I know that though I am a fool for giving in to my son's madness, these are the only terms I propose; and if you, Lady, so deal

with her as to make her accept them, you are free without ransom to go where you will.'

'You expect me to sell my sister,' said Eleanor disdainfully.

'Look you here,' broke in Rudiger, bursting out of his shyness. 'She is the fairest maiden, gentle or simple, I ever saw; I love her with all my heart. If she be mine, I swear to make her a thousand times more cared for than your sister the Dauphiness; and if all be true your Scottish archers tell me, you Scottish folk have no great cause to disdain an Elsass forest castle.'

An awkward recollection of the Black Knight of Lorn came across Eleanor, but she did not lose her stately dignity.

'It is not the wealth or poverty that we heed,' she said, 'but the nobility and princeliness.'

'There is nothing to be done then, son,' said the old Baron, 'but to wait a day or two and see

whether the maiden herself will be less proud and more reasonable. Otherwise, these ladies understand that there will be close imprisonment and diet according to the custom of the border till a thousand gold crowns be paid down for each of these sisters of a Scotch king, and five hundred for Madame here; and when that is like to be found, the demoiselle herself may know,' and he laughed.

'We have those who will take care of our ransom,' said Eleanor, though her heart misgave her. 'Moreover, Duke Sigismund will visit such an offence dearly!' and there was a glow on her cheeks.

'He knows better than to meddle with a vassal of Lorraine,' said the old man.

'King René——' began Eleanor.

'He is too wary to meddle with a vassal of Elsass,' sneered the Baron. 'No, no, Lady, ransom or wedding, there lies your choice.'

With this there appeared to be a kind of truce,

perhaps in consequence of the appearance of a great pie; and Eleanor did not refuse to sit down to the table and partake of the food, though she did not choose to converse; whereas Madame de Ste. Petronelle thought it wiser to be as agreeable as she could, and this, in the opinion of the Court of the Dauphiness, was not going very far.

Long before the Barons and their retainers had finished, little Trudchen came hurrying down to say that the lady was crying and calling for her sister, and Eleanor was by no means sorry to hasten to her side, though only to receive a petulant scolding for the desertion that had lasted so very long, according to the sick girl's sensations.

Matters remained in abeyance while the illness continued; Jean had a night of fever, and when that passed, under the experienced management of Dame Elspie, as the sisters called her more and more, she was very weak and sadly depressed.

Sometimes she wept and declared she should die in these dismal walls, like her mother at Dunbar, and never see Jamie and Mary again; sometimes she blamed Elleen for having put this mad scheme into her head; sometimes she fretted for her cousins Lilias and Annis of Glenuskie, and was sure it was all Elleen's fault for having let themselves be separated from Sir Patrick; while at others she declared the Drummonds faithless and disloyal for having gone after their own affairs and left the only true and leal heart to die for her; and then came fresh floods of tears, though sometimes, as she passionately caressed Skywing, she declared the hawk to be the only faithful creature in existence.

Baron Rudiger was evidently very uneasy about her; Barbe reported how gloomy and miserable he was, and how he relieved his feelings by beating the unfortunate man who had been leading the horse,

and in a wiser manner by seeking fish in the torrent and birds on the hills for her refreshment, and even helping Trudchen to gather the mountain strawberries for her. This was, however, so far from a recommendation to Jean, that after the first Barbe gave it to be understood that all were Trudchen's providing.

They suspected that Barbe flattered and soothed 'her boy,' as she termed him, with hopes, but they owed much to the species of authority with which she kept him from forcing himself upon them. Eleanor sometimes tried to soothe her sister, and while away the time with her harp. The Scotch songs were a great delight to Dame Elspie, but they made Jean weep in her weakness, and Elleen's great resource was King René's parting gift of the tales of Huon de Bourdeaux, with its wonderful chivalrous adventures, and the appearances of the dwarf Oberon; and she greatly enjoyed the idea of

the pleasure it would give Jamie—if ever she should see Jamie again; and she wondered, too, whether the Duke of the Tirol knew the story—which even at some moments amused Jean.

There was a stair above their chamber, likewise in the thickness of the wall, which Barbe told them they might safely explore, and thence Eleanor discovered that the castle was one of the small but regularly-built fortresses not uncommon on the summit of hills. It was an octagon—as complete as the ground would permit—with a huge wall and a tower at each angle. One face, that on the most accessible side, was occupied by the keep in which they were, with a watch-tower raising its finger and banner above them, the little, squat, round towers around not lifting their heads much above the battlements of the wall. The descent on most of the sides was almost precipitous, on two entirely so, while in the rear another steep hill rose so abruptly

that it seemed to frown over them though separated by a ravine.

Nothing was to be seen all round but the tops of trees—dark pines, beeches, and chestnuts in the gay, light green of spring, a hopeless and oppressive waste of verdure, where occasionally a hawk might be seen to soar, and whence the howlings of wolves might be heard at night.

Jean was, in a week, so well that there was no cause for deferring the interview any longer, and, indeed, she was persuaded that Elleen had not been half resolute or severe enough, and that she could soon show the two Barons that they detained her at their peril. Still she looked white and thin, and needed a scarf for her arm, when she caused herself to be arrayed as splendidly as her sister had been, and descended to the hall, where, like Eleanor, she took the initiative by an appeal against the wrong and injustice that held two free-born royal ladies captive.

'He who has the power may do as he wills, my pretty damsel,' replied the old Baron. 'Once for all, as I told your sister, these threats are of no avail, though they sound well to puff up your little airs. Your own kingdom is a long way off, and breeds more men than money; and as to our neighbours, they dare not embroil themselves by meddling with us borderers. You had better take what we offer, far better than aught your barbarous northern lords could give, and then your sister will be free, without ransom, to depart or to stay here till she finds another bold baron of the Marches to take her to wife. Ha, thou Rudiger! why dost stand staring like a wild pig in a pit? Canst not speak a word for thyself?'

'She shall be my queen,' said Rudiger hoarsely, bumping himself down on his knees, and trying to master her hand, but she drew it away from him.

'As if I would be queen of a mere nest of robbers and freebooters,' she said. 'You forget, Messires, that my sister is daughter-in-law to the King of France. We must long ago have been missed, and I expect every hour that my brother, the Dauphin, will be here with his troops.'

'That's what you expect. So you do not know, my proud demoiselle, that my son would scarce have been rash enough to meddle with such lofty gear, for all his folly, if he had not had a hint that maidens with royal blood but no royal portions were not wanted at Court, and might be had for the picking up!'

'It is a brutal falsehood, or else a mere invention of the traitor Hall's, our father's murderer!' said Jean, with flashing eyes. 'I would have you to know, both of you, my Lords, that were we betrayed and forsaken by every kinsman we have, I will not degrade the blood royal of Scotland by mating it

with a rude and petty freebooter. You may keep us captives as you will, but you will not break our spirit.'

So saying, Jean swept back to the stairs, turning a deaf ear to the Baron's chuckle of applause and murmur, 'A gallant spirited dame she will make thee, my junker, and hold out the castle well against all foes, when once she is broken in.'

Jean and Eleanor alike disbelieved that Louis could have encouraged this audacious attempt, but they were dismayed to find that Madame de Ste. Petronelle thought it far from improbable, for she believed him capable of almost any underhand treachery. She did, however, believe that though there might be some delay, a stir would be made, if only by her own son, which would end in their situation being publicly known, and final release coming, if Jean could only be patient and resolute.

But to the poor girl it seemed as if the ground were cut from under her feet; and as her spirits drooped more and more, there were times when she said, 'Elleen, I must consent. I have been the death of the one true heart that was mine! Why should I hold out any longer, and make thee and Dame Elspie wear out your days in this dismal forest hold? Never shall I be happy again, so it matters not what becomes of me.'

'It matters to me,' said Elleen. 'Sister, thinkest thou I could go away to be happy, leaving thee bound to this rude savage in his donjon? Fie, Jean, this is not worthy of King James's daughter; he spent all those years of patience in captivity, and shall we lose heart in a few days?'

'Is it a few days? It is like years!'

'That is because thou hast been sick. See now, let us dance and sing, so that the jailers may know we are not daunted. We have been shut up ere

now, God brought us out, and He will again, and we need not pine.'

'Ah, then we were children, and had seen nothing better; and—and there was not *his* blood on me!'

And Jean fell a-weeping.

CHAPTER X

TENDER AND TRUE

'For I am now the Earlis son,
And not a banished man.'—*The Nut-Brown Maid.*

'O St. Andrew! St. Bride! Our Lady of Succour! St. Denys!—all the lave of you, that may be nearest in this fremd land,—come and aid him. It is the Master of Angus, ye ken—the hope of his house. He'll build you churches, gie ye siller cups and braw vestments gin ye'll bring him back. St. Andrew! St. Rule! St. Ninian!—you ken a Scots tongue! Stay his blood,—open his een,—come to help ane that ever loved you and did you honour!'

So wailed Ringan of the Raefoot, holding his master's head on his knees, and binding up as best

he might an ugly thrust in the side, and a blow which had crushed the steel cap into the midst of the hair. When he saw his master fall and the ladies captured, he had, with the better part of valour, rushed aside and hid himself in the thicket of thorns and hazels, where, being manifestly only a stray horseboy, no search was made for him. He rightly concluded that, dead or alive, his master might thus be better served than by vainly struggling over his fallen body.

It seemed as though, in answer to his invocation, a tremor began to pass through Douglas's frame, and as Ringan exclaimed, 'There! there!—he lives! Sir, sir! Blessings on the saints! I was sure that a French reiver's lance could never be the end of the Master,' George opened his eyes.

'What is it?' he said faintly. 'Where are the ladies?'

'Heed not the leddies the noo, sir, but let me bind

your head. That cap has crushed like an egg-shell, and has cut you worse than the sword. Bide still, sir, I say, if ye mean to do any gude another time!'

'The ladies—Ringan——'

'The loons rid aff wi' them, sir—up towards the hills yonder. Nay! but if ye winna thole to let me bind your wound, how d'ye think to win to their aid, or ever to see bonnie Scotland again?'

George submitted to this reasoning; but, as his senses returned, asked if all the troop had gone.

'Na, sir; the ane with that knight who was at the tourney—a plague light on him—went aff with the leddies—up yonder; but they, as they called the escort—the Archers of the Guard, as they behoved to call themselves—they rid aff by the way that we came by—the traitor loons!'

'Ah! it was black treachery. Follow the track of the ladies, Ringan;—heed not me.'

'Mickle gude that wad do, sir, if I left you

bleeding here! Na, na; I maun see you safely bestowed first before I meet with ony other. I'm the Douglas's man, no the Stewart's.'

'Then will I after them!' cried George of Angus, starting up; but he staggered and had to catch at Ringan.

There was no water near; nothing to refresh or revive him had been left. Ringan looked about in anxiety and distress on the desolate scene—bare heath on one side, thicket, gradually rising into forest and mountain, on the other. Suddenly he gave a long whistle, and to his great joy there was a crackling among the bushes and he beheld the shaggy-faced pony on which he had ridden all the way from Yorkshire, and which had no doubt eluded the robbers. There was a bundle at the saddle-bow, and after a little coquetting the pony allowed itself to be caught, and a leathern bottle was produced from the bag, containing something exceedingly sour, but

with an amount of strength in it which did something towards reviving the Master.

'I can sit the pony,' he said; 'let us after them.'

'Nae sic fulery,' said Ringan. 'I ken better what sorts a green wound like yours, sir! Sit the pony ye may, but to be safely bestowed, ere I stir a foot after the leddies.'

George broke out into fierce language and angry commands, none of which Ringan heeded in the least.

'Hist!' he cried, 'there's some one on the road. Come into shelter, sir.'

He was half dragging, half supporting his master to the concealment of the bushes, when he perceived that the new-comers were two friars, cowled, black gowned, corded, and barefooted.

'There will be help in them,' he muttered, placing his master with his back against a tree;

for the late contention had produced such fresh exhaustion that it was plain the wounds were more serious than he had thought at first.

The two friars, men with homely, weather-beaten, but simple good faces, came up, startled at seeing a wounded man on the way-side, and ready to proffer assistance.

Need like George Douglas's was of all languages, and besides, Ringan had, among the exigencies of the journey, picked up something by which he could make himself moderately well understood. The brethren stooped over the wounded man and examined his wounds. One of them produced some oil from a flask in his wallet, and though poor George's own shirt was the only linen available, they contrived to bandage both hurts far more effectually than Ringan could.

They asked whether this was the effect of a quarrel or the work of robbers.

'*Routiers*,' Ringan said. 'The ladies — we guarded them — they carried them off — up there.'

'What ladies?—the Scottish princesses?' asked one of the friars; for they had been at Nanci, and knew who had been assembled there; besides that, the Scot was known enough all over France for the nationality of Ringan and his master to have been perceived at once.

George understood this, and answered vehemently, 'I must follow them and save them!'

'In good time, with the saints' blessing,' replied Brother Benigne soothingly, 'but healing must come first. We must have you to our poor house yonder, where you will be well tended.'

George was lifted to the pony's back, and supported in the saddle by Ringan and one of the brethren. He had been too much dazed by the cut on the head to have any clear or consecutive notion

as to what they were doing with him, or what passed round him; and Ringan did his best to explain the circumstances, and thought it expedient to explain that his master was 'Grand Seigneur' in his own country, and would amply repay whatever was done for him; the which Brother Gérard gave him to understand was of no consequence to the sons of St. Francis. The brothers had no doubt that the outrage was committed by the Balchenburg Baron, the ally of the *écorcheurs* and *routiers*, the terrors of the country, in his impregnable castle. No doubt, they said, he meant to demand a heavy ransom from the good King and Dauphin. For the honour of Scotland, Ringan, though convinced that Hall had his share in the treason, withheld that part of the story. To him, and still more to his master, the journey seemed endless, though in reality it was not more than two miles before they arrived at a little oasis of wheat and orchards growing round

a vine-clad building of reddish stone, with a spire rising in the midst.

Here the porter opened the gate in welcome. The history was volubly told, the brother-infirmarer was summoned, and the Master of Angus was deposited in a much softer bed than the good friars allowed themselves. There the infirmarer tended him in broken feverish sleep all night, Ringan lying on a pallet near, and starting up at every moan or murmur. But with early dawn, when the brethren were about to sing prime, the lad rose up, and between signs and words made them understand that he must be released, pointing towards the mountains, and comporting himself much like a dog who wanted to be let out.

Perceiving that he meant to follow the track of the ladies, the friars not only opened the doors to him, but gave him a piece of black barley bread, with which he shot off, like an arrow from a bow,

towards the place where the catastrophe had taken place.

George Douglas's mind wandered a good deal from the blow on his head, and it was not till two or three days had elapsed that he was able clearly to understand what his follower had discovered. Almost with the instinct of a Red Indian, Ringan had made his way. At first, indeed, the bushes had been sufficiently trampled for the track to be easy to find, but after the beech-trees with no underwood had been reached, he had often very slight indications to guide him. Where the halt had taken place, however, by the brook-side, there were signs of trampling, and even a few remnants of food ; and after a long climb higher, he had come on the marks of the fall of a horse, and picked up a piece of a torn veil, which he recognised at once as belonging to the Lady Joanna. He inferred a struggle. What had they been doing to her?

Faithful Ringan had climbed on, and at length had come below the castle. He had been far too cautious to show himself while light lasted, but availing himself of the shelter of trees and of the projections, he had pretty well reconnoitred the castle as it stood on its steep slopes of turf, on the rounded summit of the hill, only scarped away on one side, whence probably the materials had been taken.

There could be no doubt that this was the prison of the princesses, and the character of the Barons of Balchenburg was only too well known to the good Franciscans.

'*Sævi et feroces*,' said the Prior to George, for Latin had turned out to be the most available medium of communication. Spite of Scott's averment in the mouth of George's grandson, Bell the Cat, that—

> 'Thanks to St. Bothan, son of mine,
> Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line,

the Douglases were far too clever to go without education, and young nobles who knew anything knew a little Latin. There was a consultation over what was to be done, and the Prior undertook to send one of his brethren into Nanci with Ringan, to explain the matter to King René, or, if he had left Nanci for Provence, to the governor left in charge. But a frontier baron like Balchenburg was a very serious difficulty to one so scrupulous in his relations with his neighbours as was good King René.

'A man of piety, peace, and learning,' said the Prior, 'and therefore despised by lawless men, like a sheep among wolves, though happy are we in living under such a prince.'

'Then what's the use of him and all his raree shows,' demanded the Scot, 'if he can neither hinder two peaceful maids from being carried off, nor will stir a finger to deliver them? Much should

we heed borders and kings if it had been a Ridley or a Græme who had laid hands on them.'

However, he consented to the Prior's proposal, and the incongruous pair set out together,—the sober-paced friar on the convent donkey, and Ringan on his shaggy pony,—both looking to civilised eyes equally rough and unkempt. At the gates they heard that King René had the day before set forth on his way to Aix, which boded ill for them, since more might be hoped from the impulsive chivalry of the King than from the strict scrupulosity of a responsible governor.

But they had not gone far on their way across the Place de La Carrière, where the tournament had been held, before Ringan startled his companion with a perfect howl, which had in it, however, an element of ecstasy, as he dashed towards a tall, bony figure in a blue cap, buff coat, and shepherd's plaid over one shoulder.

'Archie o' the Brake. Archie! Oh, ye're a sight for sair een! How cam' ye here?'

'Eh!' was the answer, equally astonished. 'Wha is it that cries on me here? Eh! eh! 'Tis never Ringan of the Raefoot—sae braw and grand?'

For Ringan was a wonderful step before him in civilisation.

Queries—'How cam' ye here?' and 'Whar' is the Master?'—were rapidly exchanged, while the friar looked on in amaze at the two wild-looking men, about whom other tall Scots, more or less well equipped, began to gather, coming from a hostelry near at hand.

The Earl of Angus, as they told him, had been neither to have nor to hold when first his embassy to Dunbar came back, and his son was found to be missing. He had been very near besieging the young King, until Bishop Kennedy had convinced him that no one of the Court had suspected the

Master's presence, far less connived at his disappearance. The truth had been suspected before long, though there was no certainty until the letter that George Douglas had at last vouchsafed to write had, after spending a good deal of time on the road, at last reached Tantallon. Then the Earl had declared that, since his son had set out on this fool's errand, he should be suitably furnished for the heir of Angus, and should play his part as became him in their sports at Nanci, whither his letter said he was bound, instead of figuring as a mere groom of Drummond of Glenuskie, and still worse, in the train of a low-born Englishman like De la Pole.

So he had sent off ten lances, under a stout kinsman who had campaigned in France before—Sir Robert Douglas of Harside—with all their followers, and full equipment, such as might befit the heir of a branch of the great House of the Bleeding Heart.

But their voyage had not been prosperous, and after riding from Flanders they had found the wedding over, and no one in the hostel having heard of the young Master of Angus, nor even having distinguished Sir Patrick Drummond, though there was a vague idea that the Scottish king's sisters had been there.

Sir Robert Douglas had gone to have an interview with the governor left in charge. Thus the separation of the party became known to him—how the Drummonds had gone to Paris, and the Scottish ladies had set forth for Châlons; but there was nothing to show with whom the Master had gone. No sooner, then, had he come forth than half his men were round him shouting that here was Ringan of the Raefoot, that the Master had been foully betrayed, and that he was lying sair wounded at a Priory not far off.

Ringan, a perfectly happy man among those who

not only had Scots tongues, but the Bleeding Heart on shield and breast, was brought up to him and told of the attack and capture of the princesses, and of the Master's wounds.

Sir Robert, after many imprecations, turned back to the governor, who heard the story in a far more complete form than if it had been related to him by Ringan and the friar.

But his hands were tied till he could communicate with King René, for border warfare was strictly forbidden, and unfortunately Duke Sigismund had left Nanci some days before for Luxembourg to meet the Duke of Burgundy.

However, just as George Douglas had persuaded the infirmarer to let him put on his clothes, there had been a clanging and jangling in the outer court, and the Lion and Eagle banner was visible. Duke Sigismund had drawn up there to water the horses, and to partake of any hospitality the Prior might offer him.

The first civilities were passing between them, when a tall figure, his red hair crossed by a bandage, his ruddy face paled, his steps faltering, came stumbling forward to the porch, crying, in his wonderful dialect between Latin and French, 'Sire, Domine Dux! Justitia! You loved the Lady Eleanor. Free her! They are prisoners to *latroni*—*un routier*—*sceleratissimo*—reiver—Balchenburg!'

Sigismund, ponderous and not very rapid, opened wide his big blue eyes, while the Prior explained in French, 'It is even so, beau sire. This poor man-at-arms was found bleeding on the way-side by our brethren, having been left for dead by the robbers of Balchenburg, who, it seems, descended on the ladies, dispersed their escort, and carried them off to the castle.'

Sigismund made some tremendously emphatic exclamation in German, and turned upon Douglas to interrogate him. They had very little of common

language, but Sigismund knew French, though he hated it, and was not devoid of Latin, so that the narrative was made tolerably clear to him, and he had no doubts or scruples as to instantly calling the *latrones* to account, and releasing the ladies. He paced up and down the guest-chamber, his spurs clattering against the stone pavement, growling imprecations in guttural German, now and then tugging at his long fair hair as he pictured Eleanor in the miscreants' power, putting queries to George, more than could be understood or answered, and halting at door or window to shout orders to his knights to be ready at once for the attack.

George was absolutely determined that, whatever his own condition, he would not be left behind, though he could only go upon Ringan's pony, and was evidently in Sigismund's opinion only a faithful groom.

It was hard to say whether he was relieved or

not when there was evidently a vehement altercation in German between the Duke and a tough, grizzled old knight, the upshot of which turned out to be that the Ritter Gebhardt von Fuchstein absolutely refused to proceed through those pine and beech forests so late in the day; since it would be only too easy to lose the way, and there might be ambuscades or the like if Balchenburg and his crew were on the watch, and there was no doubt that they were allied with all the *routiers* in the country.

Sigismund raged, but he was in some degree under the dominion of his prudent old Marskalk, and had to submit, while George knew that another night would further restore him, and would besides bring back his attendant.

The next hour brought more than he had expected. Again there was a clattering of hoofs, a few words with the porter, and to the utter amazement of the Prior, as well as of Duke Sigismund, who had just

been served with a meal of Franciscan diet, a knight in full armour, with the crowned heart on his breast, dashed into the hall, threw a hasty bow to the Prior, and throwing his arms round the wounded man-at-arms, cried aloud, 'Geordie—the Master—ye daft callant! See what you have brought yourself to! What would the Yerl your father say?'

'I trow that I have been striving to do my devoir to my liege's sisters,' answered George. 'How does my father?—and my mother? Make your obeisance to the Duke of the Tirol, Rab. Ye can knap the French with him better than I. Now I can go with him as becomes a yerl's son, for the freedom of the lady!'

Sir Robert, a veteran Scot, who knew the French world well, was soon explaining matters to Duke Sigismund, who presently advanced to the heir of Angus, wrung his hand, and gave him to understand that he accepted him as a comrade in their doughty

enterprise, and honoured his proceeding as a piece of knight-errantry. He was free from any question whether George was to be esteemed a rival, by hearing it was the Lady Joanna for whose sake he thus adventured himself, whereas it was not her beauty, but her sister's intellect, that had won the heart of Sigismund. Perhaps Sir Robert somewhat magnified the grandeur of the house of Douglas, for Sigismund seemed to view the young man as an equal, which he was not, as the Hapsburgs of Alsace and the Tirol were sovereign princes; but, on the other hand, George could count princesses among his ancestresses, and only Jean's personal ambition had counted his as a *mésalliance*.

It was determined to advance upon the Castle of Balchenburg the next morning, the ten Scottish lances being really forty men, making the Douglas's troop not much inferior to the Alsatian.

A night's rest greatly restored George, and equip-

ments had been brought for him, which made him no longer appear only the man-at-arms, but the gallant young nobleman, though not yet entitled to the Golden Spurs.

Ringan served as their guide up the long hills, through the woods, up steep slippery slopes, where it became expedient to leave behind the big heavy war-horses under a guard, while the rest pushed forward, the Master of Angus's long legs nearly touching the ground, as, not to waste his strength, he was mounted on Ringan's sure-footed pony, which seemed at home among mountains. Sigismund himself, and the Tirolese among his followers, were chamois-hunters and used enough to climbing, and thus at length they found themselves at the foot of the green rounded slopes of the *balchen* or *ballon*, crowned by the fortress with its eight corner-turrets and the broader keep.

Were Elleen and Jean looking out—when the

Alsatian trumpeter came forward in full array, and blew three sonorous blasts, echoing among the mountains, and doubtless bringing hope to the prisoners? The rugged walls of the castle had, however, an imperturbable look, and there was nothing responsive at the gateway.

A pursuivant then stood forth—for Sigismund had gone in full state to his intended wooing at Nanci—and called upon the Baron of Balchenburg to open his gates to his liege lord the Duke of Alsace.

On this a wicket was opened in the gate; but the answer, in a hoarse shout, was that the Baron of Balchenburg owned allegiance only, under the Emperor Frederick, to King René, Duke of Lorraine.

What hot words were thereupon spoken between Sigismund, Gebhardt, and the two Douglases it scarcely needs to tell; but, looking at the strength

of the castle, it was agreed that it would be wiser to couple with the second summons an assurance that, though Duke Sigismund was the lawful lord of the mountain, and entrance was denied at the peril of the Baron, yet he would remit his first wrath, provided the royal ladies, foully and unjustly detained there in captivity, were instantly delivered up in all safety.

To this the answer came back, with a sound of derisive mockery—One was the intended wife of Baron Rudiger; the other should be delivered up to the Duke upon ransom according to her quality.

'The ransom I will pay,' roared Sigismund in German, 'shall be by the axe and cord!'

The while George Douglas gnashed his teeth with rage when the reply as to Jean had been translated to him. The Duke hurled his fierce defiance at the castle. It should be levelled with

the ground, and the robbers should suffer by cord, wheel, and axe.

But what was the use of threats against men within six or eight feet every way of stone wall, with a steep slippery slope leading up to it? Heavily armed horsemen were of no avail against it. Even if there were nothing but old women inside, there was no means of making an entrance. Sigismund possessed three rusty cannon, made of bars of iron hooped together; but they were no nearer than Strasburg, and if they had been at hand, there was no getting them within distance of those walls.

There was nothing for it but to blockade the castle while sending after King René for assistance and authority. The worst of it was, that starving the garrison would be starving the captives; and likewise, so far up on the mountain, a troop of eighty or ninety men and horses were as liable to lack of provisions as could be the besieged garrison.

Villages were distant, and transport not easy to find. Money was never abundant with Duke Sigismund, and had nearly all been spent on the entertainments at Nanci; nor could he make levies as lord of the country-folk, since the more accessible were not Alsatian, but Lorrainers, and to exasperate their masters by raids would bring fresh danger. Indeed, the two nearest castles were on Lorraine territory; their masters had not a much better reputation than the Balchenburgs, and, with the temptation of war-horses and men in their most holiday equipment, were only too likely to interpret Sigismund's attack as an invasion of their dukedom, and to fall in strength upon the party.

All this Gebhardt represented in strong colours, recommending that this untenable position should not be maintained.

Sigismund swore that nothing should induce him to abandon the unhappy ladies.

'Nay, my Lord Duke, it is only to retreat till King René sends his forces, and mayhap the French Dauphin.'

'To retreat would be to prolong their misery. Nay, the felons would think them deserted, and work their will. Out upon such craven counsel!'

'The captive ladies may be secured from an injury if your lordship holds a parley, demands the amount of ransom, and, without pledging yourself, undertakes to consult the Dauphin and their other kinsmen on the matter.'

'Detained here in I know not what misery, exposed to insults endless? Never, Gebhardt! I marvel that you can make such proposals to any belted knight!'

Gebhardt grumbled out, 'Rather to a demented lover! The Lord Duke will sing another tune ere long.'

Certainly it looked serious the next day when

Sir Robert Douglas had had the greatest difficulty in hindering a hand-to-hand fight between the Scots and Alsatians for a strip of meadow land for pasture for their horses; when a few loaves of black bread were all that could be obtained from one village, and in another there had been a fray with the peasants, resulting in blows by way of payment for a lean cow and calf and four sheep. The Tirolese laid the blame on the Scots, the Scots upon the Tirolese; and though disputes between his Tirolese and Alsatian followers had been the constant trouble of Sigismund at Nanci, they now joined in making common cause against the Scots, so that Gebhardt strongly advised that these should be withdrawn to Nanci for the present, the which advice George Douglas hotly resented. He had as good a claim to watch the castle as the Duke. He was not going to desert his King's sisters, far less the lady he had followed from Scotland. If any one was to be

ordered off, it should be the fat lazy Alsatians, who were good for nothing but to ride big Flemish horses, and were useless on a mountain.

Gebhardt and Robert Douglas, both experienced men of the world, found it one of their difficulties to keep the peace between their young lords; and each day was likely to render it more difficult. They began to represent that it could be made a condition that the leaders should be permitted to see the ladies and ascertain whether they were treated with courtesy; and there was a certain inclination on Sigismund's part, when he was driven hard by his embarrassments, to allow this to be proposed.

The very notion of coming to any terms made Geordie furious. If the craven Dutchman chose to sneak off and go in search of a ransom, forsooth, he would lie at the foot of the castle till he had burrowed through the walls or found a way over the battlements.

'Ay,' said Douglas of Harside drily, 'or till the Baron sticks you in the thrapple, or his next neighbour throws you into his dungeon.'

In the meantime the captives themselves were suffering, as may well be believed, agonies of suspense. Their loophole did not look out towards the gateway, but they heard the peals of the trumpet, started up with joy, and thought their deliverance was come. Eleanor threw herself on her knees; Lady Lindsay began to collect their properties; Jean made a rush for the stair leading to the top of the turret, but she found her way barred by one of the few men-at-arms, who held his pike towards her in a menacing manner.

She tried to gaze from the window, but it told her nothing, except that a certain murmur of voices broke upon the silence of the woods. Nothing more befell them. They eagerly interrogated Barbe.

'Ah yes, lady birds!' she said, 'there is a gay

company without, all in glittering harness, asking for you, but my Lords know 'tis like a poor frog smelling at a walnut, for any knight of them all to try to make way into this castle!'

'Who are they? For pity's sake, tell us, dear Barbe,' entreated Eleanor.

'They say it is the Duke himself; but he has never durst meddle with my Lords before. All but the Hawk's tower is in Lorraine, and my Lord can bring a storm about his ears if he lifts a finger against us. A messenger would soon bring Banget and Steintour upon him. But never you fear, fair ladies, you have friends, and he will come to terms,' said good old Barbe, divided between pity for her guests and loyalty to her masters.

'If it is the Duke, he will free you, Elleen,' said Jean weeping; 'he will not care for me!'

'Jeanie, Jeanie, could you think I would be set free without you?'

'You might not be able to help yourself. 'Tis you that the German wants.'

'Never shall he have me if he be such a recreant, mansworn fellow as to leave my sister to the reiver. Never!'

'Ah! if poor Geordie were there, he would have moved heaven and earth to save me; but there is none to heed me now,' and Jean fell into a passion of weeping.

When they had to go down to supper, the younger Baron received them with the news—'So, ladies, the Duke has been shouting his threats at us, but this castle is too hard a nut for the like of him.'

'I have seen others crack their teeth against it,' said his father; and they both laughed, a hoarse derisive laugh.

The ladies vouchsafed not a word till they were allowed to retire to their chamber.

They listened in the morning for the sounds of an assault, but none came; there was absolutely nothing but an occasional hum of voices and clank of armour. When summoned to the mid-day meal, it was scanty.

'Ay,' said the elder Baron, 'we shall have to live hard for a day or two, but those outside will live harder.'

'Till they fall out and cut one another's throats,' said his son. 'Fasting will not mend the temper of Hans of Schlingen and Michel au Bec rouge.'

'Or till Banget descends on him for meddling on Lorraine ground,' added old Balchenburg. 'Eat, lady,' he added to Jean; 'your meals are not so large that they will make much odds to our stores. We have corn and beer enough to starve out those greedy knaves outside!'

Poor Jean was nearly out of her senses with distress and uncertainty, and being still weak, was

less able to endure. She burst into violent hysterical weeping, and had to be helped up to her own room, where she sometimes lay on her bed; sometimes raged up and down the room, heaping violent words on the head of the tardy cowardly German; sometimes talking of loosing Skywing to show they were in the castle and cognisant of what was going on; but it was not certain that Skywing, with the lion rampant on his hood, would fly down to the besiegers, so that she would only be lost.

Eleanor, by the very need of soothing her sister, was enabled to be more tranquil. Besides, there was pleasure in the knowledge that Sigismund had come after her, and there was imagination enough in her nature to trust to the true knight daring any amount of dragons in his lady's cause. And the lady always had to be patient.

CHAPTER XI

FETTERS BROKEN

Then long and loud the victor shout
From turret and from tower rang out ;
The rugged walls replied.

SCOTT, *Lord of the Isles.*

'SIR, I have something to show you.'

It was the early twilight of a summer's morning when Ringan crept up to the shelter of pine branches under which George Douglas was sleeping, after hotly opposing Gebhardt, who had nearly persuaded his master that retreat was inevitable, unless he meant to be deserted by more than half his men.

George sat up. 'Anent the ladies?' he said.

Ringan bowed his head, with an air of mystery, and George doubted no longer, but let him lead the

way, keeping among the brushwood to the foot of the quarry whence the castle had been built. It had once been absolutely precipitous, no doubt, but the stone was of a soft quality, on which weather told; ivy and creepers had grown on it, and Ringan pointed to what to dwellers on plains might have seemed impracticable, but to those who had bird's-nested on the crags of Tantallon had quite a different appearance. True, there was castle wall and turret above, but on this, the weather side, there had likewise been a slight crumbling, which had been neglected, perhaps from over security, perhaps on account of the extreme difficulty of repairing, where there was the merest ledge for foothold above the precipitous quarry; indeed, the condition of the place might never even have been perceived by the inhabitants, as there were no traces of the place below having been frequented.

'"Tis a mere staircase as far as the foot of the

walls compared with the Guillemot's crag,' observed Ringan.

'And a man with a heart and a foot could be up the wall in the corner where the ivy grows,' added George. 'It is well, Ringan, thou hast done good service. Here is the way.'

'With four or five of our own tall carles, we may win the castle, and laugh at the German pock-puddings,' added Ringan. 'Let them gang their gate, and we'll free our leddies.'

George was tempted, but he shook his head. 'That were scarce knightly towards the Duke,' he said. 'He has been gude friend to me, and I may not thus steal a march on him. Moreover, we ken na the strength of the loons within.'

'I misdoot there being mair than ten of them,' said Ringan. 'I have seen the same faces too often for there to be many. And what there be we shall take napping.'

That was true; nevertheless George Douglas felt bound in honour not to undertake the enterprise without the cognisance of his ally, though he much doubted the Germans being alert or courageous enough to take advantage of such a perilous clamber.

Sigismund had a tent under the pine-trees, and a guard before the entrance, who stood, halbert in hand, like a growling statue, when the young Scot would have entered, understanding not one word of his objurgations in mixed Scotch and French, but only barring the way, till Sigismund's own '*Wer da?*' sounded from within.

'*Moi*—George of Angus!' shouted that individual in his awkward French. 'Let me in, Sir Duke; I have tidings!'

Sigismund was on foot in a moment. 'And from King René?' he asked.

'Far better, strong heart and steady foot can

achieve the adventure and save the ladies unaided! Come with me, beau sire! Silently.'

George had fully expected to see the German quail at the frightful precipice and sheer wall before him, but the Hapsburg was primarily a Tirolean mountaineer, and he measured the rock with a glistening triumphant eye.

'Man can,' he said. 'That will we. Brave sire, your hand on it.'

The days were almost at their longest, and it was about five in the morning, the sun only just making his way over the screen of the higher hills to the north-east, though it had been daylight for some time.

Prudence made the two withdraw under the shelter of the woods, and there they built their plan, both young men being gratified to do so without their two advisers.

Neither of them doubted his own footing, and

George was sure that three or four of the men who had come with Sir Robert were equally good crags-men. Sigismund sighed for some Tirolese whom he had left at home, but he had at least one man with him ready to dare any height; and he thought a rope would make all things sure. Nothing could be attempted till the next night, or rather morning, and Sigismund decided on sending a messenger down to the Franciscans to borrow or purchase a rope, while George and Ringan, more used to shifts, proceeded to twist together all the horses' halters they could collect, so as to form a strong cable.

To avert suspicion, Sigismund appeared to have yielded to the murmurs of his people, and sent more than half his troop down the hill, in the expectation that he was about to follow. The others were withdrawn under one clump of wood, the Scotsmen under another, with orders to advance upon the gateway of the castle so soon as they should hear a

summons from the Duke's bugle, or the cry, 'A Douglas!' Neither Sir Gebhardt nor Sir Robert was young enough or light enough to attempt the climb, each would fain have withheld his master, had it been possible, but they would have their value in dealing with the troop waiting below.

So it came to pass that when Eleanor, anxious, sorrowful, heated, and weary, awoke at daydawn and crept from the side of her sleeping sister to inhale a breath of morning breeze and murmur a morning prayer, as she gazed from her loophole over the woods with a vague, never-quenchable hope of seeing something, she became aware of something very stealthy below—the rustling of a fox, or a hare in the fern mayhap, though she could not see to the bottom of the quarry, but she clung to the bar, craned forward, and beheld far down a shaking of the ivy and white-flowered rowan; then a hand, grasping the root of a little sturdy birch,

then a yellow head gradually drawn up, till a thin, bony, alert figure was for a moment astride on the birch. Reaching higher, the sunburnt, freckled face was lifted up, and Eleanor's heart gave a great throb of hope. Was it not the wild boy, Ringan Raefoot? She could not turn away her head, she durst not even utter a word to those within, lest it should be a mere fancy, or a lad from the country bird's-nesting. Higher, higher he went, lost for a moment among the leaves and branches, then attaining a crag, in some giddy manner. But, but —what was that head under a steel cap that had appeared on the tree? What was that face raised for a moment? Was it the face of the dead? Eleanor forced back a cry, and felt afraid of wakening herself from what she began to think only a blissful dream,—all the more when that length of limb had reared itself, and attained to the dizzy crag above. A fairer but more solid face, with a

long upper lip, appeared, mounting in its turn. She durst not believe her eyes, and she was not conscious of making any sound, unless it was the vehement beating of her own heart; but perhaps it was the power of her own excitement that communicated itself to her sleeping sister, for Jean's voice was heard, 'What is it, Elleen; what is it?'

She signed back with her hand to enjoin silence, for her sense began to tell her that this must be reality, and that castles had before now been thus surprised by brave Scotsmen. Jean was out of bed and at the loophole in a moment. There was room for only one, and Eleanor yielded the place, the less reluctantly that the fair head had reached the part veiled by the tree, and Jean's eyes would be an evidence that she herself might trust her own sight.

Jean's glance first fell on the backs of the

ascending figures, now above the crag. 'Ah! ah!' she cried, under her breath, 'a surprise—a rescue! Oh! the lad—stretching, spreading! The man below is holding his foot. Oh! that tuft of grass won't bear him. His knees are up. Yes—yes! he is even with the top of the wall now. Elleen! Hope! Brave laddie! Why—'tis—yes—'tis Ringan. Now the other, the muckle carle—Ah!' and then a sudden breathless silence came over her.

Eleanor knew she had recognised that figure!

Madame de Ste. Petronelle was awake now, asking what this meant.

'Deliverance!' whispered Eleanor. 'They are scaling the wall. Oh, Jean, one moment——'

'I canna, I canna,' cried Jean, grasping the iron bar with all her might: 'I see his face; he is there on the ledge, at fit of the wall, in life and strength. Ringan—yes, Ringan is going up the wall like a cat!'

'Where is he? Is he safe—the Duke, I would say?' gasped Eleanor. 'Oh, let me see, Jeanie.'

'The Duke, is it? Ah! Geordie is giving a hand to help him on the ground. Tak' tent, tak' tent, Geordie. Dinna coup ower. Ah! they are baith there, and one—two—three muckle fellows are coming after them.'

'Climbing up there!' exclaimed the Dame, bustling up. 'God speed them. Those are joes worth having, leddies!'

'There! there—Geordie is climbing now. St. Bride speed him, and hide them. Well done, Duke! He hoisted him so far. Now his hand is on that broken stone. Up! up! His foot is in the cleft now! His hand—oh!—clasps the ivy! God help him! Ah, he feels about. Yes, he has it. Now—now the top of the battlement. I see no more. They are letting down a rope. Your Duke disna climb like my Geordie, Elleen!'

'Oh, for mercy's sake, to your prayers, dinna wrangle about your joes, bairns,' cried Madame de Ste. Petronelle. 'The castle's no won yet!'

'But is as good as won,' said Eleanor. 'There are barely twelve fighting men in it, and sorry loons are the maist. How many are up yet, Jeanie?'

'There's a fifth since the Duke yet to come up,' answered Jean, 'eight altogether, counting the callant Ringan. There!'

''Tis the warder's horn. They have been seen!' and the poor women clasped their hands in fervent prayer, with ears intent; but Jean suddenly darted towards her clothes, and they hastily attired themselves, then cautiously peeped out at their door, since neither sight nor sound came to them from either window. The guard who had hindered their passage was no longer there, and Jean led the way down the spiral stairs. At the slit looking into the

court they heard cries and the clash of arms, but it was too high above their heads for anything to be seen, and they hastened on.

There also in the narrow court was a fight going on—but nearly ended. Geordie Douglas knelt over the prostrate form of Rudiger von Balchenburg, calling on him to yield, but meeting no answer. One or two other men lay overthrown, three or four more were pressed up against a wall, howling for mercy. Sigismund was shouting to them in German—Ringan and the other assailants standing guard over them; but evidently hardly withheld from slaughtering them. The maidens stood for a moment, then Jean's scream of welcome died on her lips, for as he looked up from his prostrate foe, and though he had not yet either spoken or risen, Sigismund had stepped to his side, and laid his sword on his shoulder.

'Victor!' said he, 'in the name of God and St.

Mary, I make thee Chevalier. Rise, Sire George of Douglas!'

'True knight!' cried Jean, leaping to his side. 'Oh, Geordie, Geordie, thou hast saved us! Thou noblest knight!'

'Ah! Lady, it canna be helpit,' said the new knight. ''Tis no treason to your brother to be dubbed after a fair fight, though 'tis by a Dutch prince.'

'Thy King's sister shall mend that, and bind your spurs,' said Jean. 'Is the reiver dead, Geordie?'

'Even so,' was the reply. 'My sword has spared his craig from the halter.'

Such were the times, and such Jean's breeding, that she looked at the fallen enemy much as a modern lady may look at a slain tiger.

Eleanor had meantime met Sigismund with, 'Ah! well I knew that you would come to our aid. So true a knight must achieve the adventure!'

'Safe, safe, I am blessed and thankful,' said the Duke, falling on one knee to kiss her hand. 'How have these robbers treated my Lady?'

'Well, as well as they know how. That good woman has been very kind to us,' said Eleanor, as she saw Barbe peeping from the stair. 'Come hither, Barbe and Trudchen, to the Lord Duke's mercy.'

They were entering the hall, and, at the same moment, the gates were thrown open, and the men waiting with Gebhardt and Robert Douglas began to pour in. It was well for Barbe and her daughter that they could take shelter behind the ladies, for the men were ravenous for some prize, or something to wreak their excitement upon, besides the bare walls of the castle, and its rude stores of meal and beer. The old Baron was hauled down from his bed by half-a-dozen men, and placed before the Duke with bound hands.

'Hola, Siege!' said he in German, all unabashed.

'You have got me at last—by a trick! I always bade Rudiger look to that quarry; but young men think they know best.'

'The old traitor!' said George in French. 'Hang him from his tower for a warning to his like, as we should do in Scotland.'

'What cause have you to show why we should not do as saith the knight?' said Sigismund.

'I care little how it goes with my old carcase now,' returned Balchenburg, in the spirit of the Amalekite of old. 'I only mourn that I shall not be there to see the strife you will breed with the lute-twanger or his fellows at Nanci.'

Gebhardt here gave his opinion that it would be wise to reserve the old man for King René's justice, so as to obviate all peril of dissension. The small garrison, to be left in the castle under the most prudent knight whom Gebhardt could select, were instructed only to profess to hold it till the Lords

of Alsace and Lorraine should jointly have determined what was to be done with it.

It was not expedient to tarry there long. A hurried meal was made, and then the victors set out on the descent. George had found his good steed in the stables, together with the ladies' palfreys, and there had been great joy in the mutual recognition; but Jean's horse was found to show traces of its fall, and her arm was not yet entirely recovered, so that she was seated on Ringan's sure-footed pony, with the new-made knight walking by her side to secure its every step, though Ringan grumbled that Sheltie would be far safer if left to his own wits.

Sigismund was proposing to make for Sarrebourg, when the glittering of lances was seen in the distance, and the troop was drawn closely together, for the chance that, as had been already thought probable, some of the Lorrainers had risen as to war

and invasion. However, the banner soon became distinguishable, with the many quarterings, showing that King René was there in person; and Sigismund rode forward to greet him and explain.

The chivalrous King was delighted with the adventure, only wishing he had shared in the rescue of the captive princesses. 'Young blood,' he said. 'Youth has all the guerdons reserved for it, while age is lagging behind.'

Yet so soon as Sir Patrick Drummond had overtaken him at Epinal, he had turned back to Nanci, and it was in consequence of what he there heard that he had set forth to bring the robbers of Balchenburg to reason. To him there was no difficulty in accepting thankfully what some would have regarded as an aggression on the part of the Duke of Alsace, and though old Balchenburg, when led up before him, seemed bent upon aggravating him. 'Ha! Sir King, so a young German and a

wild Scot have done what you, with all your kingdoms, have never had the wit to do.'

'The poor old man is distraught,' said the King, while Sigismund put in—

'Mayhap because you never ventured on such audacious villainy and *outrecuidance* before.'

'Young blood will have its way,' repeated the old man. 'Nay, I told the lad no good would come of it, but he would have it that he had his backers, and in sooth that escort played into his hands. Ha! ha! much will the fair damsels' royal *beau-frère* thank you for overthrowing his plan for disposing of them.'

'Hark you, foul-mouthed fellow,' said King René; 'did I not pity you for your bereavement and ruin, I should requite that slander of a noble prince by hanging you on the nearest tree.'

'Your Grace is kindly welcome,' was the answer.

René and Sigismund, however, took counsel

together, and agreed that the old man should, instead of this fate, be relegated to an abbey, where he might at least have the chance of repenting of his crimes, and be kept in safe custody.

'That's your mercy,' muttered the old mountain wolf when he heard their decision.

All this was settled as they rode back along the way where Madame de Ste. Petronelle had first become alarmed. She had now quite resumed her authority and position, and promised protection and employment to Barbe and Trudchen. The former had tears for 'her boy,' thus cut off in his sins; but it was what she always foreboded for him, and if her old master was not thankful for the grace offered him, she was for him.

King René, who believed not a word against his nephew, intended himself to conduct the ladies to the Court of his sister, and see them in safety there. Jean, however, after the first excitement, so drooped

as she rode, and was so entirely unable to make answer to all the kindness around her, that it was plain that she must rest as soon as possible, and thus hospitality was asked at a little country castle, around which the suite encamped. A pursuivant was, however, despatched by René to the French Court to announce the deliverance of the princesses, and Sir Patrick sent his son David with the party, that his wife and the poor Dauphiness might be fully reassured.

There was a strange stillness over Château le Surry when David rode in triumphantly at the gate. A Scottish archer, who stood on guard, looked up at him anxiously with the words, 'Is it weel with the lassies?' and on his reply, 'They are sain and safe, thanks, under Heaven, to Geordie Douglas of Angus!' the man exclaimed, 'On, on, sir squire, the saints grant ye may not be too late for the puir Dolfine! Ah! but she has been sair misguided.'

'Is my mother here?' asked David.

'Ay, sir, and with the puir lady. Ye may gang in without question. A' the doors be open, that ilka loon may win in to see a princess die.'

The pursuivant, hearing that the King and Dauphin were no longer in the castle, rode on to Châlons, but David dismounted, and followed a stream of persons, chiefly monks, friars, and women of the burgher class, up the steps, and on into the vaulted room, the lower part shut off by a rail, against which crowded the curious and only half-awed multitude, who whispered to each other, while above, at a temporary altar, bright with rows of candles, priests intoned prayers. The atmosphere was insufferably hot, and David could hardly push forward; but as he exclaimed in his imperfect French that he came with tidings of Madame's sisters, way was made, and he heard his mother's

voice. 'Is it? Is it my son? Bring him. Oh, quickly!'

He heard a little, faint, gasping cry, and as a lane was opened for him, struggled onwards. In poor Margaret's case the etiquette that banished the nearest kin from Royalty *in articulo mortis* was not much to be regretted. David saw her—white, save for the death-flush called up by the labouring breath, as she lay upheld in his mother's arms, a priest holding a crucifix before her, a few ladies kneeling by the bed.

'Good tidings, I see, my son,' said Lady Drummond.

'Are—they—here?' gasped Margaret.

'Alack, not yet, Madame; they will come in a few days' time.' She gave a piteous sigh, and David could not hear her words.

'Tell her how and where you found them,' said his mother.

David told his story briefly. There was little but a quivering of the heavy eyelids and a clasping of the hands to show whether the dying woman marked him, but when he had finished, she said, so low that only his mother heard, 'Safe! Thank God! *Nunc dimittis.* Who was it—young Angus?'

'Even so,' said David, when the question had been repeated to him by his mother.

'So best!' sighed Margaret. 'Bid the good father give thanks.'

Dame Lilias dismissed her son with a sign. Margaret lay far more serene. For a few minutes there was a sort of hope that the good news might inspire fresh life, and yet, after the revelation of what her condition was in this strange, frivolous, hard-hearted Court, how could life be desired for her weary spirit? She did not seem to wish—far less to struggle to wish—to live to see them again; perhaps there was an instinctive feeling that, in her weari-

ness, there was no power of rousing herself, and she would rather sink undisturbed than hear of the terror and suffering that she knew but too well her husband had caused.

Only, when it was very near the last, she said, 'Safe! safe in leal hands. Oh, tell my Jeanie to be content with them—never seek earthly crowns—ashes—ashes—Elleen—Jeanie—all of them—my love—oh! safe, safe. Now, indeed, I can pardon——'

'Pardon!' said the French priest, catching the word. 'Whom, Madame, the Sieur de Tillay?'

Even on the gasping lips there was a semi-smile. 'Tillay—I had forgotten! Tillay, yes, and another.'

If no one else understood, Lady Drummond did, that the forgiveness was for him who had caused the waste and blight of a life that might have been so noble and so sweet, and who had treacherously prepared a terrible fate for her young innocent sisters.

It was all ended now; there was no more but to hear the priest commend the parting Christian soul, while, with a few more faint breaths, the soul of Margaret of Scotland passed beyond the world of sneers, treachery, and calumny, to the land 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.'

CHAPTER XII

SORROW ENDED

'Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies:
Death, avenger of wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies.'

Much Ado About Nothing.

A DAY'S rest revived Jean enough to make her eager to push on to Châlons, and enough likewise to revive her coquettish and petulant temper.

Sigismund and Eleanor might ride on together in a species of paradise, as having not only won each other's love, but acted out a bit of the romance that did not come to full realisation much more often in those days than in modern ones. They were quite content to let King René glory in them

almost as much as he had arrived at doing in his own daughter and her Ferry, and they could be fully secure; Sigismund had no one's consent to ask, save a formal licence from his cousin, the Emperor Frederick III, who would pronounce him a fool for wedding a penniless princess, but had no real power over him; while Eleanor was certain that all her kindred would feel that she was fulfilling her destiny, and high sweet thoughts of thankfulness and longing to be a blessing to him who loved her, and to those whom he ruled, filled her spirit as she rode through the shady woods and breezy glades, bright with early summer.

Jean, however, was galled by the thought that every one at home would smile and say that she might have spared her journey, and that, in spite of all her beauty, she had just ended by wedding the Scottish laddie whom she had scorned. True, her heart knew that she loved him and none other, and

that he truly merited her; but her pride was not willing that he should feel that he had earned her as a matter of course, and she was quite as ungracious to Sir George Douglas, the Master of Angus, as ever she had been to Geordie of the Red Peel, and she showed all the petulance of a semi-convalescent. She would not let him ride beside her, his horse made her palfrey restless, she said; and when King René talked about her true knight, she pretended not to understand.

'Ah!' he said, 'be consoled, brave sire; we all know it is the part of the fair lady to be cruel and merciless. Let me sing you a *roman* both sad and true!'

Which good-natured speech simply irritated George beyond bearing. 'The daft old carle,' muttered he to Sir Patrick, 'why cannot he let me gang my ain gate, instead of bringing all their prying eyes on me? If Jean casts me off the noo, it will be all his fault.'

These small vexations, however, soon faded out of sight when the drooping, half-hoisted banner was seen on the turrets of Château le Surry, and the clang of a knell came slow and solemn on the wind. No one was at first visible, but probably a warder had announced their approach, for various figures issued from the gateway, some coming up to René, and David Drummond seeking his father. The tidings were in one moment made known to the two poor girls—a most sudden shock, for they had parted with their sister in full health, as they thought, and Sir Patrick had only supposed her to have been chilled by the thunderstorm. Yet Eleanor's first thought was, 'Ah! I knew it! Would that I had clung closer to her and never been parted.' But the next moment she was startled by a cry—Jean had slid from her horse, fainting away in George Douglas's arms.

Madame de Ste. Petronelle was at hand, and the

Lady of Glenuskie quickly on the spot; and they carried her into the hall, where she revived, and soon was in floods of tears. These were the days when violent demonstration was unchecked and admired as the due of the deceased, and all stood round, weeping with her, King Charles himself leaning forward to wring her hands, and cry, 'My daughter, my good daughter!' As soon as the first tempest had subsided, the King supported Eleanor to the chapel, where, in the midst of rows of huge wax candles, Margaret lay with placid face, and hands clasped over a crucifix, as if on a tomb, the pall that covered all except her face embellished at the sides with the blazonry of France and Scotland. Her husband, with his thin hands clasped, knelt by her head, and requiems were being sung around by relays of priests. There was fresh weeping and wailing as the sisters cast sprinklings of holy water on her, and then Jean, sinking down quite

exhausted, was supported away to a chamber where the sisters could hear the story of these last sad days from Lady Drummond.

The solemnities of Margaret's funeral took their due course—a lengthy one, and then, or rather throughout, there was the consideration what was to come next. Too late, all the Court seemed to have wakened to regret for Margaret. She had been open-handed and kindly, and the attendants had loved her, while the ladies who had gossiped about her habits now found occupation for their tongues in indignation against whosoever had aspersed her discretion. The King himself, who had always been lazily fond of the *belle fille* who could amuse him, was stirred, perhaps by René, into an inquiry into the scandalous reports, the result of which was that Jamet de Tillay was ignominiously banished from the Court, and Margaret's fair fame vindicated, all too late to save her heart from breaking. The displeasure

that Charles expressed to his son in private on the score of poor Margaret's wrongs, is, in fact, believed to have been the beginning of the breach which widened continually, till finally the unhappy father starved himself to death in a morbid dread of being poisoned by his son.

However, for the present, the two Scottish princesses reaped the full benefit of all the feeling for their sister. The King and Queen called them their dearest daughters, and made all sorts of promises of marrying and endowing them, and Louis himself went outwardly through all the forms of mourning and devotion, and treated his two fair sisters with extreme civility, such as they privately declared they could hardly bear, when they recollected how he had behaved before Margaret.

Jean in especial flouted him with all the sharpness and pertness of which she was capable; but do what she would, he received it all with a smiling

indifference and civility which exasperated her all the more.

The Laird and Lady of Glenuskie were in some difficulty. They could not well be much longer absent from Scotland, and yet Lilias had promised the poor Dauphiness not to leave her sisters except in some security. Eleanor's fate was plain enough, Sigismund followed her about as her betrothed, and the only question was whether, during the period of mourning, he should go back to his dominions to collect a train worthy of his marriage with a king's daughter; but this he was plainly reluctant to do. Besides the unwillingness of a lover to lose sight of his lady, the catastrophe that had befallen the sisters might well leave a sense that they needed protection. Perhaps, too, he might expect murmurs at his choice of a dowerless princess from his vassals of the Tirol.

At any rate, he lingered and accompanied the

Court to Tours, where in the noble old castle the winter was to be spent.

There Sir Patrick and his wife were holding a consultation. Their means were well-nigh exhausted. What they had collected for their journey was nearly spent, and so was the sum with which Cardinal Beaufort had furnished his nieces. It was true that Eleanor and Jean were reckoned as guests of the French King, and the knight and lady and attendants as part of their suite; but the high proud Scottish spirits could not be easy in this condition, and they longed to depart, while still by selling the merely ornamental horses and some jewels they could pay their journey. But then Jean remained a difficulty. To take her back to Scotland was the most obvious measure, where she could marry George of Angus as soon as the mourning was ended.

'Even if she will have him,' said Dame Lilias,

'I doubt me whether her proud spirit will brook to go home unwedded.'

'Dost deem the lassie is busking herself for higher game? That were an evil requital for his faithful service and gallant daring.'

'I cannot tell,' said Lilias. 'The maid has always been kittle to deal with. I trow she loves Geordie in her inmost heart, but she canna thole to feel herself bound to him, and it irks her that when her sisters are wedded to sovereign princes, she should gang hame to be gudewife to a mere Scots Earl's son.'

'The proud unthankful peat! Leave her to gang her ain gate, Lily. And yet she is a bonny winsome maid, that I canna cast off.'

'Nor I, Patie, and I have gi'en my word to her sister. Yet gin some prince cam' in her way, I'd scarce give much for Geordie's chance.'

'The auld king spake once to me of his younger

son, the Duke of Berry, as they call him,' said Sir Patrick; 'but the Constable told me that was all froth, the young duke must wed a princess with a tocher.'

'I trust none will put it in our Jeanie's light brain,' sighed Lily, 'or she will be neither to have nor to hold.'

The consultation was interrupted by the sudden bursting in of Jean herself. She flew up to her friends with outstretched hands, and hid her face in Lilias's lap.

'Oh, cousins, cousins! tak' me away out of *his* reach. He has been the death of poor Meg, now he wants to be mine.'

They could not understand her at first, and indeed shame as well as dismay made her incoherent —for what had been proposed to her was at that time unprecedented. It is hard to believe it, yet French historians aver that the Dauphin Louis

actually thought of obtaining a dispensation for marrying her. In the unsettled condition of the Church, when it was divided by the last splinterings, as it were, of the great schism, perhaps the astute Louis deemed that any prince might obtain anything from whichever rival Pope he chose to acknowledge, though it was reserved for Alexander Borgia to grant the first licence of this kind. To Jean the idea was simply abhorrent, alike as regarded her instincts and for the sake of the man himself. His sneering manner towards her sister had filled her with disgust and indignation, and he had, in those days, been equally contemptuous towards herself—besides which she was aware of his share in her capture by Balchenburg, and whispers had not respected the manner in which his silence had fostered the slanders that had broken Margaret's heart.

'I would sooner wed a viper!' she said.

What was Louis's motive it is very hard to

guess. Perhaps there was some real admiration of Jean's beauty, and it seems to have been his desire that his wife should be a nonentity, as was shown in his subsequent choice of Charlotte of Savoy. Now Jean was in feature very like her sister Isabel, Duchess of Brittany, who was a very beautiful woman, but not far from being imbecile, and Louis had never seen Jean display any superiority of intellect or taste like Margaret or Eleanor, but rather impatience of their pursuits, and he therefore might expect her to be equally simple with the other sister. However that might be, Sir Patrick was utterly incredulous; but when his wife asked Madame Ste. Petronelle's opinion, she shook her head, and said the Sire Dauphin was a strange ower cannie chiel, and advised that Maître Jaques Cœur should be consulted.

'Who may he be?'

'Ken ye not Jaques Cœur? The great merchant

of Bourges—the man to whom, above all others, France owes it that we be not under the English yoke. The man, I say, for it was the poor Pucelle that gave the first move, and ill enough was her reward, poor blessed maiden as she was. A saint must needs die a martyr's death, and they will own one of these days that such she was! But it was Maître Cœur that stirred the King and gave him the wherewithal to raise his men—lending, they called it, but it was out of the free heart of a true Frenchman who never looked to see it back again, nor even thanks for it!'

'A merchant?' asked Sir Patrick.

'Ay, the mightiest merchant in the realm. You would marvel to see his house at Bourges. It would fit a prince! He has ships going to Egypt and Africa, and stores of silk enough to array all the dames and demoiselles in France! Jewels fit for an emperor, perfumes like a very grove of camphire.

Then he has mines of silver and copper, and the King has given him the care of the coinage. Everything prospers that he sets his hand to, and he well deserves it, for he is an honest man where honest men are few.'

'Is he here?'

'Yea; I saw his green hood crossing the court of the castle this very noon. The King can never go on long without him, though there are those that so hate him that I fear he may have a fall one of these days. Methinks I heard that he ay hears his morning mass when here at the little chapel of St. James, close to the great shrine of St. Martin, at six of the clock in the morning, so as to be private. You might find him there, and whatever he saith to you will be sooth, whether it be as you would have it, or no.'

On consideration Sir Patrick decided to adopt the lady's advice, and on her side she reflected that

it might be well to take care that the interview did not fail for want of recognition.

The glorious Cathedral of Tours was standing up dark, but with glittering windows, from the light within deepening the stained glass, and throwing out the beauty of the tracery, while the sky, brightening in the autumn morning, threw the towers into relief, when, little recking of all this beauty, only caring to find the way, Sir Patrick on the one hand, the old Scots French lady on the other, went their way to the noble west front, each wrapped in a long cloak, and not knowing one another, till their eyes met as they gave each other holy water at the door, after the habit of strangers entering at the same time.

Then Madame de Ste. Petronelle showed the way to the little side chapel, close to the noble apse. There, beneath the six altar-candles, a priest was hurrying through a mass in a rapid ill-pro-

nounced manner, while, besides his acolyte, worshippers were very few. Only the light fell on the edges of a dark-green velvet cloak and silvered a grizzled head bowed in reverence, and Madame de Ste. Petronelle touched Sir Patrick and made him a significant sign.

Daylight was beginning to reveal itself by the time the brief service was over. Sir Patrick, stimulated by the lady, ventured a few steps forward, and accosted Maître Cœur as he rose, and drawing forward his hood was about to leave the church.

'Beau Sire, a word with you. I am the kinsman and attendant of the Scottish King's sisters.'

'Ah! one of them is to be married. My steward is with me. It is to him you should speak of her wardrobe,' said Jaques Cœur, an impatient look stealing over his keen but honest visage.

'It is not of Duke Sigismund's betrothed that I

would speak,' returned the Scottish knight; 'it is of her sister.'

Jaques Cœur's dark eyes cast a rapid glance, as of one who knew not who might lurk in the recesses of a twilight cathedral.

'Not here,' he said, and he led Sir Patrick away with him down the aisle, out into the air, where a number of odd little buildings clustered round the walls of the cathedral, even leaning against it, heedless of the beauty they marred.

'By your leave, Father,' he said, after exchanging salutations with a priest, who was just going out to say his morning's mass, and leaving his tiny bare cell empty. Here Sir Patrick could incredulously tell his story, and the merchant could only sigh and own that he feared that there was every reason to believe that the intention was real. Jaques Cœur, religiously, was shocked at the idea, and, politically, wished the Dauphin to make a more

profitable alliance. He whispered that the sooner the lady was out of reach the better, and even offered to advance a loan to facilitate the journey.

There followed a consultation in the securest place that could be devised, namely, in the antechamber where Sir Patrick and Lady Drummond slept to guard their young princesses, in the palace at Tours, Jean, Eleanor, and Madame de Ste. Petronelle having a bedroom within.

Sir Patrick's view was that Jean might take her leave in full state and honour, leaving Eleanor to marry her Duke in due time; but the girl shuddered at this. 'Oh no, no; he would call himself my brother for the nonce and throw me into some convent! There is nothing for it but to make it impossible. Sir Patie, fetch Geordie, and tell him, an' he loves me, to wed me on the spot, and bear me awa' to bonnie Scotland. Would that I had never been beguiled into quitting it.'

'Geordie Douglas! You were all for flouting him a while ago,' said Eleanor, puzzled.

'Dinna be sae daft like, Elleen, that was but sport, and—and a maid may not hold herself too cheap! Geordie that followed me all the way from home, and was sair hurt for me, and freed me from yon awsome castle. Oh, could ye trow that I could love ony but he?'

It was not too easy to refrain from saying, 'So that's the end of all your airs,' but the fear of making her fly off again withheld Lady Drummond, and even Eleanor.

George did not lodge in the castle, and Sir Patrick could not sound him till the morning; but for a long space after the two sisters had laid their heads on the pillow Jean was tossing, sometimes sobbing; and to her sister's consolations she replied, 'Oh, Elleen, he can never forgive me! Why did my hard, dour, ungrateful nature so sport with his

leal loving heart? Will he spurn me the now? Geordie, Geordie, I shall never see your like! It would but be my desert if I were left behind to that treacherous spiteful prince,—I wad as soon be a mouse in a cat's claw!'

But George of Angus made no doubt. He had won his ladylove at last, and the only further doubt remained as to how the matter was to be carried out. Jaques Cœur was consulted again. No priest at Tours would, he thought, dare to perform the ceremony, for fear of after-vengeance of the Dauphin; and Sir Patrick then suggested Father Romuald, who had been lingering in his train waiting to cross the Alps till his Scotch friends should have departed and winter be over; but the deed would hardly be safely done within the city.

The merchant's advice was this: Sir Patrick, his Lady, and the Master of Angus had better openly take leave of the Court and start on the way to

Brittany. No opposition would be made, though if Louis suspected Lady Jean's presence in their party, he might close the gates and detain her; Jaques Cœur therefore thought she had better travel separately at first. For Eleanor, as the betrothed bride of Sigismund, there was no danger, and she might therefore remain at Court with the Queen. Jaques Cœur, the greatest merchant of his day, had just received a large train of waggons loaded with stuffs and other wares from Bourges, on the way to Nantes, and he proposed that the Lady Jean should travel with one attendant female in one of these, passing as the wife and daughter of the foreman. These two personages had actually travelled to Tours, and were content to remain there, while their places were taken by Madame de Ste. Petronelle and Jean.

We must not describe the parting of the sisters, nor the many messages sent by Elleen to bonny

Scotland, and the brothers and sisters she was willing to see no more for the sake of her Austrian Duke. Of her all that needs to be said is that she lived and died happy and honoured, delighting him by her flow of wit and poetry, and only regretting that she was a childless wife.

Barbe and Trudchen were to remain in her suite, Barbe still grieving for 'her boy,' and hoping to devote all she could obtain as wage or *largesse* to masses for his soul, and Trudchen, very happy in the new world, though being broken in with some difficulty to civilised life.

Having been conveyed by by-streets to the great factory or shop of Maître Cœur at Tours, a wonder in itself, though far inferior to his main establishment at Bourges, Madame de Ste. Petronelle and Jean, with her faithful Skywing nestled under her cloak, were handed by Jaques himself to seats in a covered wain, containing provisions for them

and also some more delicate wares, destined for the Duchess of Brittany. He was himself in riding gear, and a troop of armed servants awaited him on horseback.

'Was he going with them?' Jean asked.

'Not all the way,' he said; but he would not part with the lady till he had resigned her to the charge of the Sire de Glenuskie. The state of the roads made it so needful that a strong guard should accompany any valuable convoy, that his going with the party would excite no suspicion.

So they journeyed on in the wain at the head of a quarter of a mile of waggons and pack-horses, slowly indeed, but so steadily that they were sure of a good start before the princess's departure was known to the Court.

It was at the evening halt at a conventual grange that they came up with the rest of the party, and George Douglas spurred forward to meet

them, and hold out his eager arms as Jean sprang from the waggon.

Wisdom as well as love held that it would be better that Jean should enter Brittany as a wife, so that the Duke might not be bribed or intimidated into yielding her to Louis. It was in the little village church, very early the next morning, that George Douglas received the reward of his long patience in the hand of Joanna Stewart, a wiser, less petulant, and more womanly being than the vain and capricious lassie whom he had followed from Scotland two years previously.

THE END

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